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# ELVIRA, LADY CASTERTON

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# ELVIRA, LADY CASTERTON.

A Novel.

BY

M. S. SCHWARTZ.

TRANSLATED FROM THE SWEDISH

BY

ANNIE WOOD.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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# ELVIRA, LADY CASTERTON.

## CHAPTER I.

IT was the last day of October. A cold east wind was sweeping through Stockholm, and the rain fell in torrents, causing the quaint little gutters to overflow, and the streets to stream with water.

Adolf Fredrik's church clock had just struck seven. It was pitch dark, and the few lights here and there in the Drottning-gatan were almost blown out by the wind, serving only to render the gloom and darkness everywhere around all the more visible. The storm and rain had driven

every one under shelter who was not obliged to be out, and only here and there was to be seen some poor fellow struggling against the wind, soaked with rain, and evidently walking as fast as possible to arrive quickly at his journey's end.

Just as the clock was toning out the last stroke, a man emerged from the Barnhaus Tavern. He had on a black coat, with the collar turned up, and his cap was pulled close down to his eyebrows. He was short, thin, and very bent. With quick, hasty steps, as if he meant to defy both rain and blast, he turned the corner into the Smedje gord-gränd.

Here the darkness was deeper, but the man did not hesitate an instant; he went on till he reached a large door at the corner of the Smedje Street. Then he stood still a moment, and cast a searching look around him. There was not a living thing in sight, but it seemed as if the rain poured

heavier and the wind howled wilder here than elsewhere. But the man only drew his cap farther over his eyes, gave a deep sigh, and leant against the door, with the evident purpose of waiting for some one.

The minutes crept slowly by, till it struck a quarter to eight, and yet the man still stood at the door of the building, within which were detained those who had broken the laws. Then a step was heard, and the gleam of a lamp shimmered through the chinks of the door, keys rattled, the locks creaked, the door opened, and out stepped a woman.

She was wrapped in a huge shawl, with a bundle beneath it. As the prison door closed behind her, the man came forward and whispered—

"How is it?"

"All is over, and at an *end*," answered the woman, in a broken voice.

"Come, let us go," murmured the man, but after a few steps he stood still, and said, "*Ended,* you said, Lotta—what do you mean?"

"I mean, 'tis at an end with *her.*"

The man continued his way, followed by the woman, without adding another word. When they reached the Drottninggatan, there was a droschka standing at the corner of the Foundling Hospital.

"You had better get in," said the man, and he helped the woman up, and seating himself by her side told the coachman to drive to No. 0, Baggens Street. As the droschka rattled over the stones, a feeble cry was heard for a moment, from the bundle the woman carried under her shawl. The man slightly turned his head, but said nothing, and in unbroken silence the two sat till the drive was over.

Arrived at No. 0, they discharged the

cab, and mounted the stone stairs till they reached the attic, four stories up. The man unlocked a door. Inside all was dark, and the rain dashed against the tiles, and the wind howled round the chimney-pots most dismally.

The room into which they entered was, however, warm, and a few minutes after the man lighted a tallow candle, which very faintly glimmered through the wretched apartment.

The woman cast a quick glance over the room. It was large and clean, but being scantily furnished, it looked cold and empty. She sighed and turned away from the man, who, with candle in hand, was eagerly watching her.

She opened her shawl, and bent her head over the babe she had in her arm, and two tears, so sad and bitter that they must have left indelible marks, fell on the little one's face.

The man had taken off neither coat nor cap, but stood dripping with rain, earnestly looking at the guests he had brought to his home. Of his face nothing could be seen but his eyes, which presently assumed an expression of curiosity.

"Is it a boy or a girl?" he asked, as he put down the candle.

"A girl," replied the woman.

"God be thanked for that," murmured the man, speaking to himself.

Then he took off his cap and coat, and went into an inner, smaller room.

The woman had seated herself on a stool with the little one on her knee, and as she lulled it to sleep the tears rolled quickly and sadly over her young and blooming cheeks. Presently the man came in again, lighted a fire in the stove, and then seating himself by the side of the young woman, said—

"Now, Lotta, tell me *everything*."

"Ah, Mr. Bromér, there isn't much to tell. Two hours after the babe was born the mother died. She died quietly, without pain, and her last words were, 'Lotta, take care of my babe, and beg Mr. Bromér to keep his promise. God have pity on my innocent child and her unfortunate father!' After that she spoke no more, and in half an hour all was over—over with the young life, and the miserable marriage. Heavens! when I think that she died in—in—in that Smedje Street—I could break my heart. *She*——indeed I can't—can't bear it. And the babe too—to be born *there*.—I can't get over it—I dare not think of it." And Lotta, who had hitherto wept in silence, now burst forth into loud sobs, which woke the baby, and made it cry.

Bromér seemed to notice neither the woman's nor the child's wailing—he was staring into the fire, lost in thought, with a

serious, anxious look in his face and attitude.

Aron Bromér was a man of two or three and forty. His frame was slight and shrunken, his hair thin and dark. He was bald on the crown of his head, his forehead projected, his nose was long and prominent, the mouth broad, with thin lips, the jaws heavy, the cheek bones high, and the eyebrows very bushy. Beneath them a pair of small, clear, shining eyes gazed forth. The expression of those eyes was soft and gentle, and seemed to atone for the general ugliness of the face, for on looking into them, although they had neither decided colour nor beauty of form, one quite forgot to notice that the skin of the man was like parchment, and that the mouth resembled a cat's.

Bromér sat still, merely moving now and then the burning wood as it crackled in the stove, till the child was quiet again; then,

as Lotta still continued sobbing, he said, roughly—

"Cease that noise—it does no good! It can't bring back the dead, or give the child either relations or a noble name, why then go on so? Listen to what I have to say. I have promised to take care of the child, and I mean to keep my promise, but you know as well as everybody else that I am only a poor man. Still, I have enough to provide for both child and nurse, only they must have very small pretensions. In this room you and the child can live, and I will content myself with the little cupboard inside, and you shall want for nothing that is necessary. If I haven't all that's rich about me, well—anyway it's better than the child might have had. Now, Lotta, what do you say—will you undertake the life of self-sacrifice, and be the child's nurse, or will you leave her to me, and seek service elsewhere? Do as you think best, but de-

cide before to-morrow morning. Then remember, after to-night, I must never hear another word of the little one's birth, for I intend to forget that she ever had any other father than myself, and to work for her as if she really were my own. Do you understand? Good-night."

And Mr. Bromér rose and was going to his own room, when Lotta answered—

"I require no time to think it over. I promised the mother to nurse her babe, and I also intend to keep my word. Wherever the child is, there I mean to be. Now you have my promise." And Lotta wiped the tears from her eyes and gathered the little creature to her bosom as tenderly as its own mother would have done. A little later Bromér said good-night, and went into his own room. It was not much bigger than a large closet. It had no stove, therefore could only be warmed from the larger room, and the only furniture in it was a flock bed,

a wooden stool, and a large box. The light entered through a pane of glass in the upper part of the door communicating between the rooms, for there was no window. After Bromér had arranged as just described for the welfare of his new charge and her nurse, and had gone to his own sanctum, he sat down on the bed, buried his face in his hands, and began to think. The flickering of a tallow candle placed in a broken bottle cast a dismal light over the occupant of the room, and seemed to make the furrows in his forehead and about his face deeper and more marked than usual.

An hour went by and he did not move; at last he rose, went to the box, and opening it took from the inside a rather thick pocket-book. Going back to his seat on the bed, he began counting the contents of the book, but count as often as he would he could not make the sum more than thirty pounds. He looked at each dirty

note, smoothed it carefully, and then one by one put them back in their place, and as he closed the pocket-book with a sigh, he muttered:

"How many sacrifices I have had to make to get even this little sum, and how often I have determined *not* to touch it! and yet *now* it seems I must, if I do for the child as I ought." As he spoke he took from his breast pocket another small thin leather case, the contents of which were not difficult to count, for it held only two rixdalers.

He clasped the pocket-book together again, and in doing so, an old worn yellow piece of paper fell to the ground. He picked it up. "Ah, my mother's last injunctions!" he exclaimed, as an expression of pain crept over his face, though it quickly changed into a half kind of bitter smile as he added, "*It* can give me no help in the matter, nor any money either—but let me see what it says again, although I know already what

it contains. 'My son, to win a *Name* requires distinguished merit and untarnished dealings with your fellows. To win wealth requires hard work, perseverance, and cunning. You are poor, begin with work; you have no home, endeavour to deal fairly. By work and rectitude you can win what you will. This advice is your mother's sole legacy.'"

Slowly Herr Bromér folded up the paper, put it back from whence it had fallen, and resigned himself to his thoughts. Presently he started from his seat, and pacing to and fro in his small room, muttered half aloud: "The past is past and cannot be brought back. Perhaps in the hope of gaining a name I have thrown away what would have helped to give me a fortune. I must and *will* be rich, if only to gather riches enough to give the child a fortune when she grows up. I have thirty pounds; many have begun with less. But,

I have decided—and—I will be a tradesman —and in my own way. Thanks, mother. I never understood before thy legacy. That word 'cunning' has opened my eyes." And Bromér laid himself down, and in his little closet all was soon dark and still.

Not so in the larger room. Lotta had no thought of sleep. She sat by the bed with the babe asleep on her knee, and her hands clasped as if in prayer. Her face was very sad and troubled, but her lips moved, and the prayer she softly whispered from her heart seemed to give her comfort and consolation. She was very young thus to bind her life and services to another's child. She was fair and pleasant to view, and the large lustrous brown eyes betokened a warm and unselfish heart.

"Never will I give you up, little one," she whispered as, her prayer over, she drew the baby to her bosom, "never, never—and

if I can do no more, I can at least teach you to love God and do right;" and kissing the child, and begging Heaven to bless it, she laid her head on the pillow, and falling asleep forgot all the troubles and sorrows of the day.

## CHAPTER II.

NINE years have passed since that night. It is spring. The May sun gilds with its rosy evening rays the tops of the churches and the roofs of the houses. All whose time is at their own disposal have gone out into the open air to enjoy the sweet sudden spring, and the song of the birds, and the soft warm breath of the wind. The streets are full of people with eager happy faces; but we must not linger amongst them, but rather go on till we come to the corner of the Bollhus-gränd, where stands a pawnbroker's shop that was not there nine years ago, and if we ask the fish boy strolling about, who

owns the shop? he will answer, "Why of course the old clothesman Bromér," and look at you with an astonished stare, as much as to say, "Well! you must be a stranger not to know old Bromér!"

And here for the last nine years had Herr Bromér lived, buying and selling old clothes, and sometimes new ones, lending to the poor gold and silver at a slight interest in exchange for their trifles, and now and then even selling at a good price some piece of rare furniture that he had picked up for a mere nothing. For there were very few auctions where Bromér was *not* to be found, and very few amongst the poor who had not pawned or sold to him some trinket, some precious treasure, some better dress, or some article of clothing in his double capacity of pawnbroker and clothesman. He often had the eyes of the police on him, but watch him as they would, they had never been able to detect him actually buy-

ing or selling stolen goods, and whatever his dealings were, he had always managed to escape being accused of breaking the law.

Leaving the shop, we will go on to Baggens Street, and mounting the four stories leading to the attics, take a peep into the room we once before visited.

The furniture is almost the same, the only addition being a large wardrobe, and two beds instead of one. Lotta is sitting at a table sewing. At the open window, mounted on a chair, stands a child of nine years, with her elbows on the window-sill, and her chin resting on her hands; she is gazing wearily and impatiently at the tiny clouds slowly sweeping across the deep blue of the sky.

The child's face was neither beautiful nor ugly, but one of those ordinary faces that might become lovely in later years, or develop into plainness as she grew older. She was remarkably pale, with not one

shade of colour in her cheeks, but her rich dark brown hair hung in beautiful thick curls far down her back.

"What are you thinking about, Elvira?" asked Lotta, as she looked up from her work. "Come here, child, and tell me—Are you praying to God?"

The child got down from the chair, and slowly went near to her nurse, holding her head down, and looking as if she expected to be scolded.

"Well, Elvira, why don't you answer? I know, dear, you can only think pious and good thoughts, so why be ashamed to tell——"

"Hush, Dadda. I wasn't thinking that at all—it's so stupid."

"What! stupid to——"

"Yes, stupid! that you always talk of God," interrupted angrily the little girl, as her pale cheeks turned suddenly scarlet. "Yes, I think so. When I look up at the

sky I want to sit on those pretty clouds, and go with them far, far away from here—and because I can't I think it's wicked of God, and papa, and you to keep me shut up here. The other children go out and play, why mayn't I? I never go—and it is not good of you, and I hate God because he makes papa and you so unkind," and the child burst into a passion of sobs.

Lotta looked utterly amazed. She was accustomed to see the little girl impatient and angry, but never before had she heard her say such words. She thought she had not heard aright, for it could not be possible that the little Elvira she had trained so carefully could say she hated God, and the frightened woman clasped her hands and murmured to herself, "God in heaven, forgive this child, who does not understand her sin!"

"If you say that, Dadda, again," broke in Elvira, stamping her foot on the ground,

"I'll go and throw myself out of the window and then it will be your fault, and papa's and God's, too," she added, defiantly.

"Child, child," exclaimed Lotta, as she laid hold of the girl's arms, "don't speak so of the Father above, or I shall not know what to do. 'Tis naughty and wicked to say such words. Think how good all are to you, and God you have to thank—"

"But I want to go and play," sobbed Elvira, as she dashed the tears away with the back of her little hand. "Never since the snow have you taken me out with you—you never let me laugh and play—and that's just what I want to do. Do you hear? I *will* go out and play. I won't sit here all day alone with you, I won't—"

Elvira stopped suddenly, for a voice behind her cried—

"Vira, how you scream! Fie, fie!" She turned round, and there stood Bromér, looking straight at her, not with anger or

displeasure on his face, but with a scornful smile, that made the angry child hang her head, as he slowly asked—

"Has Lotta offended you again? That was very strange of her—because you see she is so stupid, she takes care of you night and day, and is always working for you, and loves you so much, she does not deserve anything better than for you to stamp your foot at her!"

Bromér was silent. Lotta stooped over her work to hide her emotion, and Elvira bit her nails and looked down.

"If Dadda was not so cross with you," continued Bromér, "she might go with you and me to Haga Park this evening, but now she must stay at home and not go, but learn to behave better."

As Bromér finished speaking Elvira sprang towards him, threw her arms round his neck, and begged him not to say so, for that it was not Lotta's fault but her own—she had

been naughty. "I am sorry, indeed I am, and I don't deserve you or any one to be kind to me;" she sobbed as sincere and earnest now in her repentance, as a few minutes before she had been wilful and passionate.

And Bromér's face lit up with joy, as the little girl left him, and going over to Lotta begged to be forgiven for her naughty words.

An hour after Lotta dressed Elvira in her best frock, and a little new jacket Bromér had just brought home for her, and then all three left the house, and soon took places in the coach just starting for Haga.

Elvira was beside herself with joy. As they walked through the lovely park she clapped her hands with delight, and sprang from flower to flower, as happy as a butterfly in her new-found freedom. Bromér sat on a bank, watching the child as she roamed about. Presently Lotta went to some dis-

tance to gather a few laurels, then he called "Elvira!"

The child came dancing towards him, her face one glow of brightness.

"Are you happy, dear?" he asked, as he touched her cheeks with his hand.

"More than I can tell," she replied, and put up her mouth to be kissed.

"But to-morrow, when you are alone again with Lotta, shall you be angry and impatient?" questioned Bromér.

"Ah, yes," sighed the child, "I know I shall. Directly I get up in that room I can't help it, it's so dull there, and I can't be good. But here, papa, with all these lovely flowers, I *do* love God, and you, and Dadda," and she stretched out her little hands with a yearning fondness towards the soft green sward all around her.

"But if you lived always in the country would you be good?"

"Yes, yes, I know I should, if you would

let me run in the forest, and not keep me indoors as you do now. Papa, why is it you never let me play as other children do ?" and she looked up in the man's face so earnestly, he answered quickly,

"Because I don't wish you to be like them ; but we won't talk of that now, for I have some news for you that will make you very happy to hear."

"What can it be ? Tell me quickly !" said the child, as she danced first on one foot and then on the other before him.

"In a few days you and Lotta shall go away from home into the country and stay there all the summer."

"And you, too ?" she asked, with glimmering eyes.

"H'm—I will come now and then—Well! child, are you content ?"

Her eyes were full of tears as she put her arms round his neck and whispered for answer,

"Now I think God and you are really kind to me and Dadda, and I will never be naughty again."

And then she flew away to find Lotta, and tell her the glad news, and as Bromér followed her with his eyes he thought, "I have done right, the child needs more freedom and fresh air; besides, she requires education. But there is time for that yet; when the autumn comes I will think about it."

A week after Elvira and Lotta had left the town and gone to Altorp, the house of Mrs. Brogren, the widow of the late dean.

Altorp was beautifully situated on the borders of one of the loveliest bays in the Baltic. The garden was one mass of pines and birch trees, behind which lay high mountains and rich green valleys. Mrs. Brogren had only been a widow some two or three years, and lately she had determined to try and add to her pension by

taking boarders and establishing a girls' school to enable her the better to pay the expenses of her son's education. Elvira and Lotta were her first inmates. It was in the coming autumn that she intended, by the advice of Count Stangenskjöld, of Timasjö, to receive not more than eight or ten young ladies as boarders. A teacher had been engaged to come at the end of the summer, and the widow hoped that as soon as her new plan was made known, pupils would arrive from the neighbouring towns. Mrs. Brogren was a thoroughly worldly woman, and about as clever as her sex usually are. The most prominent traits in her character were self-interest, calculation, and curiosity. She was a good housekeeper, always busy and chatty, never hasty or angry with those around her, but without the least affection for any one but her two sons and herself.

Bromér paid well for Elvira and Lotta,

and the widow made up her mind when they had been in the house a few days that she would do her utmost to keep them with her always. She therefore ingratiated herself with Lotta that the nurse should speak kindly of her to Bromér, and advise him to let Elvira remain with her for her education. And to the little girl she gave cakes and sweets and other good things, (and petted and made much of her), till the "sweet little Vira" soon found out that her kind hostess refused her nothing. As soon as the widow discovered how pious Lotta was, she instituted morning and evening prayer, and this pleased Lotta, and made her more than ever satisfied with the household arrangements. The child was as happy and bright as a bird let loose from a cage after a long captivity. She was in the open air from morning till night, and only came indoors to eat and sleep and, when obliged, for prayers.

The next estate to Altorp was Timasjö, owned by Count Stangenskjöld, who was at present away from home, and not expected back till the end of the summer. And Elvira spent whole days roaming about the Timasjö park with the overseer's children and the steward's little daughter, a child of her own age, enjoying her unaccustomed freedom and the still greater delight of childish companionship.

For Herr Bromér had laid strict injunctions upon Lotta to let the child enjoy to her heart's content the charm of the country life, and not to restrict or fetter her movements in any way, but to let her run about wherever her wish carried her.

And as Lotta never objected to anything that was for her nursling's good, she gave a willing consent, and let her run wild—only on one point she still insisted upon obedience, and that was, that the evening

and morning prayer was never to be forgotten.

And while Elvira strayed about the park, Lotta sat in the porch with her work, and very often the widow would come and sit by her and talk.

Several weeks had slipped by since Elvira and Lotta's arrival, and still Mrs. Brogren had not satisfied her curiosity as to the relationship of her guests.

One day she boldly asked Lotta, "Is Elvira Herr Bromér's daughter?"

Lotta quietly and simply answered, "Yes," but when she went on to inquire about the child's mother, the only reply she had was that she was dead.

"Is it many years since Herr Bromér lost his wife?" persisted Mrs. Brogren.

"I never asked him," unwillingly answered Lotta, and there the subject dropped.

But the widow had found out for herself

that Bromér had never married, and putting one or two other bits of gossip together, she had decided for herself that Lotta was the child's mother, although it was not surmised by any one else.

And the widow thought the whole affair very ridiculous, as a man in the old clothesman's position could easily have married Lotta, but there was evidently some secret which, with all her efforts, she could not find out.

One morning, in the course of conversation, Mrs. Brogren said—

"My neighbour, the owner of Timasjö——"

"Timasjö!" exclaimed Lotta, hastily looking up from her work; "is it near here?"

"Quite near. Why, that is Timasjö Park which joins my birch grove. Do you know the estate?" asked the widow, as she looked curiously over her spectacles at Lotta, who seemed much moved.

"I have heard speak of the place," answered Lotta, as she resumed her work.

"Squire von Harlén owned it before, and in his day there was always plenty of amusement going on in the summer, for he, with his beautiful daughters, came every year to celebrate the midsummer fêtes here at Timasjö, as being a widower, he generally lived the rest of the year at his other place, Forsvik."

"Are you still speaking of Count Stangenskjöld?" remarked Lotta.

"Of course I am. Do you know him?"

The dean's widow thought that Lotta appeared very uncomfortable, and looked very confused as she answered—

"I don't know Count Stangenskjöld personally, but I have heard of him."

"He is a very strange man, isn't he?" inquired the widow.

Lotta merely nodded her head and said

nothing, but Mrs. Brogren was not satisfied, so after a moment she went on.

"They say that the count paid his addresses to both the squire's daughters. The eldest first, and then just as every one thought the marriage was to take place, she jilted her lover, and ran off with a servant."

"That's not true," exclaimed Lotta, unguardedly. "Fröken Marianne did *not* run off, she married."

"Ah! ah! I think you know something of the story, then. I, too, should like to hear a little more about it. They tell so many tales about Fröken Marianne—anyway, she must have been a wilful, headstrong girl."

Whilst she was speaking Lotta's face grew scarlet and her eyes flashed with indignation, but controlling herself, she merely answered as the colour ebbed away and left her pale as usual—

"I know nothing much of Squire von Harlén, except that Fröken Marianne did not run off, and—and that she was never engaged to Count Stangenskjöld."

The widow was quite convinced that Lotta knew much more of the Harlén affair than she chose to tell, but with all her questions she gained no more information; and ever after that day when she broached the subject in conversation, Lotta was immediately silent and more reserved than usual, so that the old lady was obliged to be content, and let her curiosity for the present lie quiescent. Mrs. Brogren loved talking, especially telling long histories of her friends and neighbours, and Lotta was such a good listener, it would have been a pity to provoke her into remaining in her own room. In the meantime, one week followed the other till Midsummer-day was close at hand. Bromér had been to see the child several times, and he was ex-

pected to pass the three fête days at Altorp, and these days the widow meant to take advantage of, and try and bring matters to such a pass that it should finally be arranged for Elvira to remain with her altogether.

The house was cleaned from top to bottom, and fine doings were going on in the kitchen, for the widow expected her sons from college.

Both were to arrive the day before Midsummer's eve.

On that day Elvira for the first time stayed at home in the afternoon to see the young gentlemen, and it was just possible also that "papa" might come by the same boat. It was not quite certain, but he would be sure to arrive that day or the next.

About four o'clock the Altorp boat went out to meet the steamer and bring back the expected guests. Elvira seated herself on

the bridge to be the first to greet the fresh arrivals, wondering, as she waited, if "the boys" would be good playmates or not for her. That they were twice as old as herself never entered her head, for she had always heard the widow speak of them as "my boys," and naturally concluded they were about her own age. At last she spied the boat.

"Won't it be nice when they come!" she thought; and as it neared the land she leaned farther and farther over the rail to get the first peep at the "boys." The boat was just within two or three oars' length of the bridge, but ere it reached over went Elvira right into the sea. She had in her anxiety overstretched herself and lost her balance. For a moment boat and "boys" and all were forgotten, and she thought she was drowned, but in the next she felt herself lifted up and laid in the boat, and finding she could use her lungs again, she began

to scream with all her might. Lotta, who was sitting in the porch, heard the screams, and came running to the bridge as fast as her legs would carry her, followed by the widow, holding a large white apron full of freshly-baked rusks. At the sight of the dripping, sobbing Elvira, the old lady dropped her apron, and down rolled the whole lot of tempting cakes into the bottom of the boat, where quietly sat her youngest son. And this was the expected meeting with the young gentlemen. One fished her out of the water, and the other was received with a shower of cakes, which the dear mamma had been baking with such care. Both were vexed with the screaming child, for the eldest had spoiled his new trousers in springing into the water, and both had to go without the tasty cakes that lay scattered and soaked in the bottom of the boat.

Lotta, more frightened than Elvira herself, took her darling into her arms, and

feeling certain that the unfortunate cold-bath would be followed by serious consequences, hurried home with her, and put her straight to bed.

Then the widow advised camphor drops, which Lotta made her take, besides a cup of elder tea. And there in bed poor little Elvira had to lie all the beautiful summer afternoon and evening, drenched in perspiration and ready to die with heat. At last sleep came to her relief, and the next morning she awoke as bright and fresh as a cricket.

It was not till later on in the day that Elvira made the acquaintance of Carl and Fredrik Brogren; and then, to her inexpressible sorrow, she discovered that the so-called "boys" were far beyond her in years and height.

The eldest, Carl, who was at least seven years older than herself, was tall and slight, and dressed in the last fashion. He had

just entered college, and was for the present engaged in teaching. He was handsome in face and somewhat serious in manner, but only just in proportion to what might be expected from his position of instructor to those younger than himself.

Fredrik was two years younger, very strong and tall, but by no means so handsome or elegant or winning as Carl. He looked with contempt on the little girl only nine years old, and thought it beneath him to take any trouble to amuse her, although his mother had entreated both her sons in the morning to be amiable to both Lotta and Elvira. He turned a deaf ear to all she said, gave her no answer, and merely returned, later on, Lotta's and Elvira's greeting with a careless nod of the head.

Carl, however, made himself pleasant to both; he teased and laughed with Elvira about her bath of the day before, and ere

the day was over he and she were very good friends. Fredrik went off and had a row on the sea, and left Carl to make friends alone with that "screaming chit of a child."

And she, with a child's utter unreserve, was charmed with him. He was so handsome, she thought; handsomer than any one else on the whole earth, and, in addition, so good and kind and clever. With Midsummer's-eve came Herr Bromér. He had a small present for every one, and he let Elvira hand them to each. She was delighted to give Carl a pocket-book with silver clasps, but it annoyed her that the ugly Fredrik also had one, for she did not like him, and thought him disagreeable.

The widow was all that was amiable. She flattered the father, praised the child, and spoke most highly of Lotta, the supposed mother.

Mrs. Brogren was a clever woman too. She knew that Herr Bromér had large money transactions with many people, and that he lent gold to all classes, and a man of his position could, she judged, be very useful to her if he so liked to be. And she had determined that Herr Bromér should obtain pupils for her, but first she must so manage as to have his only daughter under her care.

Three days he remained at Altorp. He talked long with Lotta, Elvira, and the widow, the result of which was that Elvira and her nurse were to remain with Mrs. Brogren, and that the child should commence her education in the autumn. He promised to procure the widow other pupils, and after that he left. A fortnight later, to Elvira's intense sorrow, Carl said good-bye to Altorp. But Fredrik remained behind, which did not please Elvira, for she never cared to have anything to do

with him. However, after Carl's departure Fredrik showed more interest in the "little one," as he named her, took her with him to fish sometimes, and now and again let her ride on his horse in the valley; and so the weeks passed by, and the first of August obliged Fredrik to go away for a few days on business, and brought Count Stangenskjöld with his family and a large number of guests and servants to Timasjö.

It happened that when the widow was first told of her neighbour's arrival, Lotta was standing by, and Mrs. Brogren noticed how first pale and then red her cheek grew, as she heard the news.

After a while Lotta asked—

"Has the count any children?"

"Yes, one daughter," answered the widow, "a little girl a year or two older than Elvira, and very beautiful. But the young lady has nothing else to boast of, for she is very proud and haughty, and has not

an amiable disposition. Her parents spoil her to a ridiculous extent; but perhaps it is not to be wondered at, for they have had eight children, none of which have lived but this eldest one, all the others died in infancy at Timasjö."

And then the dean's widow went on to explain how they died, and what a great antipathy the countess had in consequence to the place, but that the count on the contrary had a great affection for this special part of his property.

In the evening when they were alone, Lotta said to her charge, "Do you know, Elvira, that the family have arrived at Timasjö?"

"Yes, indeed I do, for the steward's little girl and I saw them come. They had such a lot of things, and so many servants and people, that it looked like the king's arrival. Oh! how nice it must be to see all the guests! Maja says that they will have

grand doings, fireworks and dancing and riding parties and hunting and sailing. And the whole park is to be lit with coloured lamps, Lotta, and that bit of the garden with the hedge round it is to be the theatre, and they will dress in gold and silver, and be painted all over the face. Oh, how I long to see it all!" And she jumped round the room, clapping her hands with joy at the prospect of so much pleasure.

Poor Lotta! she sighed as she listened to the little one's chatter, and seemed more inclined to burst into tears than to smile, and when Elvira stopped breathless before her, she stroked gently the child's cheek as she said softly—

"But all that amusement you must not go and see."

"Why not?" exclaimed the child, amazed.

"Because papa would not be pleased. Listen to me, Elvira, a moment," she added; "you must go no more to Timasjö, nor play

in the park or go even to see the grand doings, not even go into the park to visit Maja. If you do, then I shall take you straight back to the town, and never return here again. Now don't forget what I say, but look at me and see I mean it, for sure as you go there, back to the town we go directly."

"But, dear Dadda," began Elvira.

"Hush, hush, child. Go to bed and remember that in this case I will have no disobedience."

Elvira was usually an obedient child, although she had a wilful and passionate nature, and now, even when all her heart was in the suddenly denied pleasure, she did not openly rebel, but went quietly to bed without showing any temper. However, ere she slept, she thought to herself, "Dadda is very stupid to forbid my going to Timasjö. She will just have to alter that decision, for I mean to see the coloured

lights and the beautiful ladies, and all that Maja told me about. God can't mean to refuse my seeing it all, and if I don't sin against Him, then Dadda has no right to say I am not to go."

The following Sunday afternoon she was playing with her little friends, when Maja proposed they should go into the park.

"The family are away to-day," added Maja, "so we can have a good look at that lovely new tent, and besides, have a peep into the fine pavilion, if the shutters are not up."

Then Elvira informed her friends of Lotta's harsh prohibition, but Maja enlightened her that the prohibition could not be binding when the count and his guests were away, and easily succeeded in persuading Elvira that against such an argument there was nothing to say. In a few minutes the children had entered the park. It is true the gate between the birch grove

and the park was locked, that difficulty they soon overcame by scrambling over the wooden fence, and soon they arrived at the new tent. It was large and pleasant to look at with its snow-white cloth and purple-red borderings.

Maja and her sisters stood at a little distance together, wondering at the tiny beautiful house made so curiously with only woven cloth.

But Elvira was not satisfied with merely looking at the outside, she went nearer, close up to it, put aside the curtain that hung at the door and stepped in. Before her was a little room beautifully furnished, the table and chairs of cane, and a sofa of such peculiar shape she had never seen one like it before. She sat down on each chair, and then thought she would like to try how it would feel to stretch full length upon such a very delightful-looking sofa.

She had scarcely made herself comfortable

when she heard voices; but she took for granted that the sounds came from the other girls, and lay still, thinking in a few minutes that they too would find the courage to follow her example and come inside.

A moment later and the curtain of the tent was lifted up, but instead of Maja and her sister, a girl of eleven or twelve years old walked in, and with her a short thin elderly man followed by a dog. The dog rushed straight at Elvira, who, horrified, sprang up. But the animal seized her leg and prevented her running away as her impulse was to do. The child uttered a loud scream at the pain as the gentleman called—

"Ici, Primus?"

The dog let go his hold, but not before the blood had dyed red the snow-white stocking of the frightened child.

And the girl, who had just entered, went

close to Elvira, and in an irritated and angry voice exclaimed—

"How came you here? How dare you come into my tent? and how dare you and those other children enter our park, when we have forbidden it?" and turning to the thin little man she added, wrathfully, "Papa, you must punish her for lying on my sofa—do it, papa, or I will be angry."

Elvira heard the peremptory words, but the pain in her leg prevented her answering. She only screamed out amidst her sobs—"The dog has bitten me, the dog has bitten me!" The gentleman lifted his whip, saying sharply:—

"It would do you good if I gave you a good beating for creeping in here, when I have forbidden all children to enter the park. Off with you at once, or you will soon feel my whip."

"No, she shan't feel it," said a boy's voice at the door of the tent, and in came

Fredrik. He gave the little lady a push on one side, which made her tumble against one of the chairs, and going straight to Elvira lifted her in his arms to carry her away, but the little man barred his passage, and would not let him pass the door, as he exclaimed—

"You clown! how dare you touch my daughter! Do you know who is speaking to you? and can't you see that my Spanish cane can reach your back too?"

"You just dare, that's all," cried Fredrik, as he put down Elvira, "and then you'll see how you like it yourself."

And quick as lightning he snatched the cane from the uplifted hand, and seeing the dog about to spring on him, he gave it a cut across the nose which sent it howling out of the way, and then catching up Elvira in his left arm, and flourishing the heavy Spanish cane with his right, before either the little man or his daughter had

recovered from their astonishment the rash boy had lifted the curtain, and left the tent. Once in the open air Fredrik flung the stick far from him, and taking Elvira in both arms, in a very few moments they were both over the other side of the hedge, and by the time the little man had ordered his servants to pursue the boy, both Fredrik and Elvira were out of the park through the birch grove and nowhere to be found.

## CHAPTER III.

THE next day Elvira had to stay in bed, and have her leg nursed, and each time Lotta bathed it she lectured her on the consequences of disobedience. Fredrik came and sat in her room, and talked and chatted to her, and showed her a boat he was making for her, and did all he could to make her forget the pain in her leg—for he was as kind and amiable to her now, as before he had been cross and neglectful.

The morning was just slipping away, when the sound of wheels was heard, and Lotta, looking out of window, exclaimed, excitedly—

"Good heavens! that is——*him.*"

"Which *him?*" uttered Fredrik and Elvira at the same moment, whilst Fredrik sprang to the window.

"The count!" stammered Lotta, looking ready to faint.

"Yes, indeed, that is really the little count," laughed Fredrik. "He has come, I suppose, to complain of me. What splendid fun it will be."

And out of the room he strode, down the stairs, and was standing at the door of the parlour by the time the count had put his first foot on the stairs. The count checked his steps at the sight of the shameless boy who had behaved so daringly the day before.

Fredrik waved his hair off his forehead, and bowed to the rich man with a manner as if he now saw him for the first time. The count's small gray eyes flamed at this quiet insolence, and it would be difficult to

say how the meeting would have ended if just at that moment the widow had not come out to receive her guest. The good woman knew nothing of the affair that had happened the day before, or how her son had behaved himself. All she knew was that Elvira had been bitten by the count's dog, and she now flattered herself he was come to inquire after the welfare of the little girl. As soon as his mother appeared Fredrik withdrew from the doorway, that she might have room to reach her guest.

"To what happy circumstance do I owe the pleasure of the noble count coming in person to visit my humble home?" began the dean's widow, as she curtsied again and again, each time lower.

"Happy!" broke in the count, with white lips; "Happy! I consider it very unhappy;" and his voice got louder as he added, "I have come to complain of that clown there, and to tell you that unless you

promise that he is immediately sent away from here, you will rue it with me."

The widow stood aghast at this outburst. She stared at the count in astonishment, and forgot to ask him to walk in, for she felt quite bewildered with the shock, that one of her boys had drawn on himself the great man's wrath—the noble count—the one man of all others upon whom she reckoned to help her in the future as to their position in the world.

The count did not wait to be invited, but walked in, leaving the poor woman to digest what he had just said. She followed mechanically, not yet able to comprehend her trouble—and Fredrik, who thought it well to be near, went in too to hear the end. But that was not what the count intended, he turned to the culprit, and pointing to the door in a commanding tone, said—

"You go out. I have come here to talk

to your mother, not with such a scoundrel as you."

"But as it concerns me," answered Fredrik, looking undauntedly in the face of his antagonist, "I mean to stay and defend myself. Besides, no one has a right to abuse me in my mother's house."

"Child, have you lost your senses?" exclaimed his mother. "Haven't you heard the count tell you to leave the room?"

"I am not going to obey him," he answered.

Never in her life had the widow thought it possible to be so angry with one of her boys as she was now. She, who had never laid a finger on either of them, now sprang forward, gave her youngest and best-loved son a sound box on the ear, opened the door, and pushed him out before he had time to think if he were waking or dreaming.

As soon as the young man was out of the

room the count gave his mother an exaggerated account of his conduct of the evening before, how disgracefully he had behaved, and what he thought of such a badly-inclined fellow. He insisted that Fredrik should come and beg pardon of him and his daughter, and if he would not, then he was to be instantly sent away, or he, the count, would withdraw his countenance from the mother and elder brother; and then he enlarged upon the bad bringing up the boy must have had for him to have dared to behave so insolently. He waited, expecting the widow to go immediately and bring her son in to sue for pardon; but the mother knew such a step would be useless, Fredrik would never submit to it.

"Herr Count, to-morrow morning Fredrik shall go from home," she said, as she sighed, "and I beg you will understand how sorry I am for what has happened. The boy's punishment shall be that he shall

never come home when you and your family are at Timasjö. Heaven knows how grieved I am that he has displeased you."

And the good lady wiped her eyes, and spoke of her gratitude and kind feelings towards the whole of the noble family.

The count deigned to say a few kind words in reply, bade her take more care of the children to be entrusted to her guardianship than she had of her own sons, and, making his bow, he took his leave.

The next morning Fredrik and his mother drove into town. She remained away three days, and when she came back she brought with her four girls as pupils, and the engaged governess.

A week later two more arrived from the urgent recommendation of Herr Bromér, and in a very few days lessons began in earnest.

Elvira was like a little wild animal to bring into order, although she was neither stupid nor idle. Her teachers had neither

more nor less trouble with her than with any of the others. Towards her school-fellows she was always kind and good-natured, she would give up everything she had so long as it made one of them happy, and in consequence she was a great favourite not only with the girls, but also with the teachers. The widow had reckoned highly on the recommendation of the count—but her expectations were disappointed, for after all his fair words he only sent her one pupil, whereas Bromér in course of time succeeded in getting her eight; so that it was natural that she should make much of the daughter of the man who had proved himself so useful to her, and who, besides, spared no expense, wherever Elvira's advantage was consulted.

Fröken Armida Kayhjelm was the only one of noble birth amongst the pupils at Altorp. She had been placed there by the advice of the count, and as soon as she en-

tered, the harmony of the school was disturbed. She had not been there many days before she saw that Elvira reigned as a little queen, and she determined to put her down if possible, and to that end she treated her coldly and proudly, and snubbed her at every turn.

At first Elvira took no notice of this. But by degrees she learnt from her schoolfellows that Armida's behaviour arose from the fact that a clothesman's daughter was not good enough to associate with higher-born people, and so Armida could not be friends with her.

This annoyed Elvira, and she resented such treatment constantly and decidedly. The two girls quarrelled and worried each other; and in the meantime the weeks slipped by, and Christmas was near at hand. Most of the pupils went home for the holidays, but Elvira, Armida, and two others, remained. Elvira forgot her bitter-

ness against Armida in her joy at again seeing Carl and Fredrik in their home.

To Carl were confided all the quarrels between the two girls, and to Elvira's intense delight Armida was generally proved in the wrong.

And Fredrik, who hated like poison every one connected with Timasjö, enjoyed teasing Armida, and provoking her in every possible way.

The strife and contention amongst them grew to such a pitch that at last the widow had to interfere and peremptorily forbid Armida to call Elvira "old clothesman's girl," or Elvira to style Armida "Miss Poverty-Stricken." And for the moment peace was outwardly restored, but in private the two girls quarrelled as much as ever, and did not hesitate to give each other the benefit of a few hard words.

If Armida had been able to follow her own inclination, she would not have re-

mained at the school. But she had no parents, and such a very slight fortune that her guardian was glad the widow's bills were moderate, and so would not hear of change. And Elvira loved Altorp far too well to wish for one moment to leave a place where every one was kind to her and cared for her, for the sake of the disagreeables she encountered from the only enemy she had ever known.

Lotta was often anxious at the effect this continual warfare between the girls might have on Elvira, and wondered sometimes if it would not be best for her to be moved to another school, but the child seemed strong enough to fight her own battle, and was so well in health that she decided to let things take their course and not to interfere.

Six years went by, and Elvira was now fifteen years old. The pale child, rather small for her age, had grown into a tall,

graceful girl, with a fresh complexion, and wonderfully beautiful hair. She was much like other girls of her age, except that the expression of her face was, perhaps, somewhat more pleasing than is generally noticed at the age when the body and soul of a girl belong neither to the child nor the woman.

Armida was three years older than Elvira, and could not at all understand why her guardian kept her still at school now she was a full-grown young lady, and her education finished.

During these six years Count Stangenskjöld and his family had been abroad. His daughter, Martha, was being educated in Paris.

It was summer time. The school had broken up, and only Armida and Elvira remained. Carl and Fredrik were just finishing their academical studies, and were at home this summer for the long vacation.

Carl was reading hard for his examination, and Fredrik for his degree. Neither had accepted for this year any appointment as tutor, as had hitherto been their custom during the three months' summer vacation. Armida was a very pretty girl, with the blooming freshness of her seventeen years. One day she was sitting with Carl in the garden, when she suddenly asked—

"Do you really believe Elvira will be beautiful?"

"I am certain of it. By the time she is your age she will be a rarely sweet girl," Carl answered, with earnestness.

"I don't agree with you at all, for to be that she will have to undergo a complete metamorphosis," said Armida, adding—"Now, she is quite ugly. And she won't be able to make herself so sweet-looking as you say. She hasn't one presentable feature. She is, besides, stupid and dull. You will be obliged to withdraw your

assertion that she will make a brilliant marriage."

"You forget, my dear Armida," interrupted Carl—"you forget that Elvira will be *rich*, very rich, and that goes for much; and she is already a very fascinating girl, and if you think her ugly, stupid, and dull, others do not. Your hatred blinds you."

"My hatred! Why should I hate her?"

"Why? Because you are jealous of her——"

"I! jealous of the clothesman's daughter! Ah, no! She can't hurt me. I know well enough that, with all her gold, she will never have a husband with as old a name as mine. I, Armida Kayhjelm, have nothing to envy the usurer's daughter. I—much as I like you—I pity you for your weakness for Elvira. The son of a dean should hold himself as much too good for such a girl's defender."

"Such a girl!" laughed Carl; "I wonder

what you mean by that. Every one likes Elvira but you, and I shouldn't mind betting that before you have seen the shadow of a lover Elvira is married to a count or a baron."

"Bet if you will—but I can answer for it there is not one poor nobleman who would have her," said the young lady, as she drew up her head haughtily.

"Don't distress yourself," said a merry voice from behind; "for I will never marry a count or a baron, any more than a marshal of France, a grandee of Spain, or a peer of England. Some one genuinely noble I mean to have—none of your shield-bearers, such as you belong to, for me, dear Armida! all poor as mice and proud as turkey-cocks!"

Armida rose to go, and with the dignity of seventeen replied—

"I don't permit myself to discuss such matters with children, least of all with you.

If one did not know from whence you sprang, your words would tell that you are the child of common people, and, let me add, your old clothes origin creeps out at every turn. Your father need not squander money on your education, it is all thrown away, and the scent of the old clothes will ever be around you, and never, *never* leave you."

A frown passed over Elvira's forehead at those words, flung so mercilessly at her; and as Armida moved to go she grasped her arm, saying, quietly, as her eyes flashed scornfully,

"If I scratch, you tear. That may be—I won't pity myself, but tell you what I came here for when I heard you say you thought no poor noble would have me. This letter came from Timasjö. Its contents will be good news, for the servant said the horses will be here at ten tomorrow morning to fetch you."

And as she finished speaking, Elvira ran off.

"Do you know, Armida," said Carl, "I think your behaviour to Elvira disgraceful. She is much better than you, for she never allows herself to speak a word against your father, and you constantly do against hers."

Elvira went down to the sea. Over the bay there swept a fresh wind, making the waves dash with white foam against the rocks growing there. She sat down and looked at the tiny angry billows as they rolled at her feet, and, resting her chin on her hands, gave full vent to her thoughts.

"Deep in the sea, in a crystal hall,"

sang out a clear strong voice in the forest. Elvira lifted her head and listened. The song came nearer, and as she turned to listen to its sound, she saw a tall, strong young fellow, with a gun on his shoulder

and hunting gear by his side, coming down from the wood.

"Fredrik!" she called out.

The song ceased, and he gave a quick look round to see who called him, and, spying Elvira, he came forward.

"Is that you, Elvira? What are you doing here alone—and with tears on your cheeks, too? I will wage my new gun you and Armida have been having a fight; but you shouldn't mind what she says. Are you really crying at your best-loved friend's words?"

"'Tis not the first time either, Fredrik. They always hurt here," and she laid her hand on her heart, "and that because she hits at my father, he who is always so good to me, and then—well, then it wounds me till I can't help crying. I have determined I will be a great lady, no matter at what price, but I will be. Yes I will, and I will be a countess—to show Armida that——"

"That you are an idiot," broke in Fredrik, laughingly. "I wonder what there is in being a countess. No, I know something far better that you ought to be." Fredrik sat down by her side, and putting his head against her lap, made himself as comfortable as he could before adding—"Do you know what you ought to be?"

"Ah, no—some of your usual nonsense, I suppose, and I am not in the humour to be teased."

"I am speaking seriously," replied Fredrik, lifting his head a little to look into her face, and she saw he was in earnest.

"Well, what shall I be?—anything rather than the 'old clothesman's daughter.'"

"You shall be a *saint.*"

"There now, didn't I say you would only make fun! and it's not kind of you when I am feeling sad."

And she turned away her head, as the tears fell one after the other.

"Indeed I'm not making fun. I have just been reading the life of Saint Cecilia, and I thought each woman ought to be a saint. Every young girl should try and so conduct herself as in time to become an angel. If you, Elvira, try and be patient and mild, never retort on Armida, and say hard things to her as she does to you, but, instead, be kind and gentle to her, she would soon cease to be ugly and wicked to you. More than that, she will be obliged to like you, and you would never again hear her say you are an 'old clothesman's daughter.'"

Fredrik was silent. His companion did not answer for a long while, then she whispered softly—

"Maybe you are right. I would like to do as you say—but—I don't believe I can."

Then she added louder, "Do you know the family are back at Timasjö?"

"The count!" exclaimed Fredrik, jumping up, "then I must go to-morrow. That man and I must not meet before I am of age."

"Now, Fredrik," rejoined the girl, "you cannot forget the wrong he did you, and you want me to——"

"To be better than I am—yes, that I do," he interrupted earnestly. "You are a woman, and must be softer than a man, don't forget that."

The next morning Fredrik went to pay a visit to one of his comrades, and the same day Armida drove to Timasjö, to stay a few weeks with Martha. The letter Elvira had given her contained the invitation for her to go at once.

The good impression left by Fredrik's words soon wore off, for Armida's absence, instead of diminishing the effect of her

bitter words, only kept them fresher in Elvira's remembrance, for not many days elapsed ere Carl was invited to Timasjö.

Carl was a very charming young fellow, and knew well how to make himself agreeable. The count, who had never forgiven Fredrik his conduct that eventful Sunday, six years ago, invited Carl to dinner to show his preference of the one over the other, and the young man seized this opportunity to make himself so pleasant and charming that the count and countess and their daughter begged him to come and visit them as often as he felt disposed.

And during the weeks that Armida remained at Timasjö, not a day passed in which Carl was not to be found there for hours.

Fröken Martha was just at the age most dangerous for an inflammable young man. Capricious, full of fun, proud and clever, and with a face and form of exquisite love-

liness, she was at the same moment bewitching and tormenting. At the end of the week Carl was so desperately smitten with her, that every one and everything was forgotten but the beautiful Martha.

Elvira's jealousy was roused, she suffered bitterly to think that Carl could so neglect her, even though she was sure it was the result of some underhand work of Armida, but for all that it was bitter. Fredrik was away, so she could not confide her sorrows to him, and consequently they grew worse as she brooded over them from day to day. Hatred and jealousy are at all times enemies to our peace of mind, and so Elvira proved now. Her happiness and usual brightness she put aside, indulged in impatience and moody fits of temper, and seemed quite different from the girl she had been a few weeks before.

Lotta could not understand what had come over her nursling, so, in her anxiety,

she wrote to Bromér and begged him to come and ask her what was the matter, for that she herself only received an impatient "Nothing," in reply to every question of what ailed her. The same day this letter was sent, Elvira asked Lotta to go with her to one of the cottages, and help her to carry a few little things she had for a poor child there, which Lotta agreed to do at once, and they set out. The road lay through the birch grove. Elvira was a few yards in advance of Lotta, and was just near the high road when she saw a knot of people coming towards her. It was the Timasjö party.

Ever since that first and only time of meeting long ago, she had taken special care never in any way to come in personal contact with the family who had treated her so roughly when a little girl. Now also she had no wish to see them; but curiosity to look at the beautiful girl walking at Carl's

side overcame all her former resolves. She hastened her steps to put a greater distance between herself and Lotta. Her heart beat so loud and fast, she could hear its throbs as she came close up to the party.

Armida, who was walking on the other side of Martha, turned her head to avoid being obliged to recognize her; but Carl, lifting his cap, nodded so smilingly at her that Fröken Martha, who noticed the greeting, gave her a quick look and said to Carl,

"Who is she?"

And Elvira heard Armida answer mockingly, "That's the old clothesman's daughter I told you about."

The words so wounded Elvira that she forgot to look at the rest of the company, and was passing onwards, when the count caused her to turn her head by exclaiming,

"Why! bless me, there's Lotta!"

And he stood still in front of Lotta as he spoke.

"Yes, it is indeed Lotta," said an elderly lady by his side, in a voice which sounded to Elvira very sad and thoughtful, adding, as she turned to Lotta; "I am very glad to see you again. I have often thought of you and wondered what had become of you."

"Madam is very good," stammered Lotta.

"Well, Lotta, where have you been these many years?" asked the count.

"For fifteen years I have been in Herr Bromér's service," she answered, raising her head.

"Fifteen years! Then you went to him three years after you left my father-in-law's?"

"Yes, I went to him the same year the countess's sister died," she said firmly, looking him full in the face.

"Do you like being there?" said the countess, somewhat abruptly.

"Yes. I couldn't wish myself better."

"What is this man—your master?" and

he stammered over the name as if it were quite unknown to him.

"He is a merchant," quietly answered Lotta, and curtseying, would have moved on that the questioning might cease; but the count added—

"Does your master live here?"

"No—only his daughter who is at school." And with that she rejoined Elvira.

And Elvira, in her turn, questioned Lotta. How was it she knew the count, and why had she never spoken of being in the service of his father-in-law, and who was the countess's sister, to all of which Lotta only answered by saying it was no concern of hers, and that she did not mean to talk about it.

So the young girl's curiosity was left unsatisfied, which did not distress her now as it would at any other time, for her thoughts were occupied with the wonderful beauty of Martha, and the mocking tone in which

Armida had uttered those few words. She thought herself the most miserable being upon the face of the world, now she was sure that Carl cared more for Martha than for his old friend—and to be laughed at for her father's sake, was more than she could bear.

"Ah!" she said to herself, "if I only could grow more beautiful than that girl, and have a grand name, and be so high that Armida would have to bow before me, and make Carl think me more lovely than even Martha—if I only could—I would never wish for anything more."

The next day Herr Bromér arrived. He spoke seriously to Elvira when they were alone, and entreated her to tell him all that troubled her—and she confided to him how Armida's words pained and wounded her, and that her one earnest desire was to become a high and noble woman. When she had finished he said—

"Perhaps in two years you shall have what you wish, but whether it will bring you happiness is another thing. Have patience till then, and I think I may promise you what you so desire. I am rich enough to buy you a husband and a great home."

No one could possibly have loved his own child better than Bromér loved Elvira; his affection for her amounted to weakness. The older she grew, the more blind he became to her faults, and had she wished for the mines of Peru he would have done what he could to obtain them for her. To him the world contained only one being, and that being was Elvira. Himself and every one else he regarded as mere mediums through which she was to become rich and happy, and but for her naturally good unselfish disposition, she would have been spoilt long ago between a father who could never say no to her, and her nurse's unbounded idolatry.

Lotta had no parents and no relatives, and not being married she did not understand a wife's duty, and therefore could not instil into Elvira's heart what she did not know herself. She taught the child to do to others as she would on all occasions they should do to her, to sacrifice self and do good so as to obtain God's blessing: more she could not teach her; but she nevertheless grieved that the child was not born to rank and nobility, and fostered from her earliest years a desire in the little one's heart, one day to bear a great name. And this desire increased and gained strength with her years, and Armida's wounding words enhanced and encouraged it, till it became the ruling passion of her life, and existence without it seemed more than she could bear.

And now her new-born jealousy of Martha suddenly raised her from a child into a woman.

A whole year passed, during which Armida had become the companion of Fröken Stangenskjöld, and neither Carl nor Fredrik had been home.

Elvira was confirmed, and with the summer she was to travel abroad with her father. Bromér's health had been failing, and the doctors advised perfect rest from work. He now determined to give up his trade in clothes and pawnbroking, and after a year or two passed abroad, to become a merchant on a grander scale.

June had come, and with it Carl, who had just passed his first examination, was expected home.

It was a lovely afternoon, and Elvira went down to the bridge to await his arrival. She was full of expectation, and her heart beat at the thought of seeing him again so soon. He was her heart's ideal of all perfection, and with her sixteen years' experience of life, she believed she loved

him with all her heart, and was ready, for his sake, to sacrifice her dearest hopes provided she could only be with him. The boat drew near containing Carl and his brother. She waved her handkerchief and smiled her welcome. The moment the boat touched the bridge Fredrik sprang out, but she barely noticed him, and stretching out her two hands, greeted Carl. He was very handsome, she thought, but not a word could she utter, so full was her heart with delight and joy at having him back.

"Why, Elvira, what a lovely girl you have grown, I hardly knew you again," was his delighted greeting, as he kissed her pretty little hands.

She blushed and smiled, but said nothing.

June and July flew by as a happy dream. Elvira loved, and was loved in return. Carl and she had whispered it to each other after the first few weeks of joy at

seeing each other again, and revelled in the bliss which youth's first love so generously bestows. The two were perfectly happy. Carl was to ask Bromér's consent when he came to fetch his daughter for the journey abroad, and when they returned he and Elvira were to be married. The desire to be a great lady had vanished from the happy girl's mind, and her one thought and wish was to live and die as Carl's wife.

But her happy dreams were shattered when she heard the family had arrived at Timasjö. The next day Carl went over to visit the count.

Elvira was uneasy, and accused Carl of caring for the beautiful Martha. He laughed, and assured her that all that was nonsense, that she was his first and *only* love, and that he went over to Timasjö merely out of compliment. But he went again and again.

Two weeks slipped by, during which

Elvira suffered a martyrdom of jealousy. Her lover was as gentle and kind as usual, but not a day passed in which he did not go over for hours to Timasjö. Then came a letter from Bromér begging Elvira and Lotta to be ready early in September for the journey, and with the letter a box of things arrived, which would be wanted in the weeks of travel. When Carl heard that the time was fixed for the journey, he stayed at home three whole days with Elvira, and was most affectionate and attentive to her.

One morning Carl went out early saying he was going to hunt. In the afternoon Elvira strolled into the forest to meet him on his road home. She waited long, but he did not come; and on asking a little peasant girl if she had seen him anywhere about, the child replied that she had met him some time before in company with the count and his daughter on horseback.

Elvira turned and went home. As soon as she reached her room she threw herself on the sofa and burst into a torrent of tears. Poor girl! her heart was aching with jealousy, and she did not try to restrain the sobs that shook her frame till she was quite exhausted. After a little she grew quiet, the torrent of pent-up passion of tears seemed to relieve her, and she lay still on the sofa too weak and wretched to care to get up. Presently she heard voices under the open window near which she lay. It was Fredrik talking to his mother angrily, for his voice was raised higher than usual as he said indignantly—

"I think Carl's conduct unworthy of him, and he will gain nothing by it."

"My dear boy, why condemn your brother so hastily?" mildly interrupted Mrs. Brogren; "it is prudence on his part. Elvira may be a very good match for him as things are, but if he can get a better

why, he would be stupid to tie himself to her and her relatives. It would be rather awkward if the future attaché was asked who his wife was when he married her?"

"How can you talk like that, mother?" exclaimed Fredrik; "it really pains me. He can't possibly be so heartless and selfish."

"Nonsense! it is not selfish, but only sensible."

"If he does it, then, it's disgraceful," persisted her son; "he had no business to pretend he loved her."

"Now do be reasonable," continued the mother; "would *you* marry Herr Bromér's daughter?"

"If I loved her, most decidedly."

"Do you value money so much, then, that you could forget the doubtful manner in which Bromér obtained his riches? If so, then you need not blame your brother, because he, in his position, means to try for

good family in choosing a wife as well as money."

"Mother, I shan't think of money when I do marry, but I know that in Carl's place I should never have deceived Elvira."

The young girl heard no more. The conversation surprised and bewildered her, though its full meaning she seemed hardly able to realize; she only felt that she was being falsely played with, and that her heart was ready to break. The tears rolled unheeded down her cheeks, as she sat trying to think what it all meant. Presently a quick footstep was heard on the stairs, and ere she had time to recover from her emotion, the door opened, and in walked Carl.

"Here I am at last, my little fair violet. Are you vexed I went off so early this morning?" he said, going up to her, but as she turned her head away from him, he went on: "Darling, at your feet I acknow-

ledge my fault. I forgot to tell you that I had promised to ride with the count to-day, and I didn't think it worth while to disturb you so early before I went out." He waited for Elvira to look at him, but she neither turned her head nor answered. "What, Elvira, are you really angry with me? Let me have a look at your blooming face? You are not going to be cross to your Carl?"

"*Mine!*" exclaimed Elvira, suddenly turning and looking him full in the face, and as she did so all doubt fled. It was not possible he was deceiving her; he could not look like that, and play with her heart. She had misunderstood his mother's words, and her jealousy of Martha had bewildered her senses. She laid her arms round Carl's neck, and putting her cheek against his, whispered whilst she blushed scarlet—"Yes, you are mine, and always will be. I know it, and I was wrong to doubt it."

"To doubt," repeated Carl, smiling; "what did you doubt about?"

"That you really cared for me."

"Goose!" he answered, kissing her on the cheek, but light as the kiss was she sprang back from him, and said hastily—

"Sit down, I want to talk to you." He sat down.

"Well! my little pet, what is it?" he asked, so brightly that Elvira, to keep her determination firm, was obliged to look away from him out of the window.

"I want to ask you seriously if you repent asking me to be your wife?" and she slowly fixed her eyes on his face.

The colour mounted to his brow, and he moved uneasily as he said, after a moment, "You have one fault, Elvira, and that is, you worry too much about the future. We are both so young, why should we think of anything but the present happy time?"

"Carl! only three weeks ago it was you who spoke of the future, and were in such a hurry to speak to my father about his letting us marry!"

"Well? yes, that was natural—but why do you ask me such questions now?"

"Because I want to know if, as I begin to think, you have changed your mind. If so, oh Carl! say so gently, I beseech you!"

He bit his lips. After a moment's hesitation he answered in a low voice—

"Well, as you insist on my saying it, I do think that as I am only twenty-two years old, and you sixteen, that we are too young to marry, and that it will be best to speak of it only after you have taken this long-talked-of journey abroad. But now don't let us think of the thing any more, but enjoy and be happy in the present moment;" and he took her hand in his—but she snatched it away, and rising from her

seat said, excitedly, and with her eyes flashing—

"You shall not have me when I return from abroad any more than now. You think you can do as you like with me. I heard your own mother say so—but it's disgraceful of you, Carl. You mean to marry Martha—but I will let her know what a faithless weak fellow you are, and then she won't care for you at all."

She flew to the door to get away from him—but Carl drew her back, and in a thick agitated voice answered—

"You shall not go—and you shan't talk to Martha—but you shall listen to me. Blame yourself if I utter words I would fain spare myself saying and you hearing. I love you, really, Elvira, far, far more than I ever cared for Martha, and to have you for my wife was my dearest hope—but I must wait—wait till it has been forgotten what your

father is, that my marriage with you may not hinder my future advancement. When your father has been abroad with you a couple of years, it will be forgotten that he made his riches by old clothes and usury, especially if we get married abroad, and he starts a fresh business—and we can afford to wait a year or so, when so much is to be gained by it."

"Then it's only my father's name you are ashamed of?" stammered Elvira.

"The last year or two your father has made a great deal of money in a way that has procured him the contempt of all honourable people—at least I was told so at Timasjö. And before this is forgotten few who care for their honour will attempt to be related to him in any way. This is a pity—but—"

"Enough," cried Elvira, proudly. "Not a word more against my father—but listen

to me. If one day you come and ask for my hand or my foot, my answer will be, 'Never! we cannot be one! My father's name has divided us'—and nothing in the world will ever make me forget that; and as God is just, He will punish you for this, Carl, in the future."

And opening the door, Elvira hastened away downstairs. Carl flung himself on the sofa, muttering—

"Provoking! but well over before the father arrived. She is a dear little girl, and the one I love best. But who would have such a father-in-law? Not I, if he had double as much money."

Half an hour after he rode over to Timasjö.

In the tiny summer-house near the birch grove, Fredrik found Elvira sobbing herself sick and ill. He had heard from the verandah Carl and her talking, and had followed her here to comfort and soothe the

poor heart-broken girl. He spoke kindly and in a friendly way to her, and bade her have courage to forget such a miserable affair, but his words neither comforted nor soothed her. He left her to have her cry out, thinking she would get better sooner if she remained quiet by herself.

A fortnight after Lotta and Elvira left Altorp. During these two weeks Carl was at Timasjö from morning till night, and Elvira took care never to leave her room till she was quite sure not to meet him.

Her whole appearance altered. She rarely smiled, her eyes were red with weeping, and her cheeks were pale and sunk. Lotta entreated to be told what it was troubled her, but the only answer she received was—"Nothing;" and she hastened her work saying not a word more; but when at last the day came to leave the home which had sheltered her for seven years, she

seemed glad and contented to say good-bye, to have the parting over, and to turn her face from the place that had hitherto been so dear to her.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE following year, about the beginning of July, Wiesbaden was crowded with guests, and its usual bath frequenters. People from every nation were assembled there to enjoy to the utmost of their power the delights of this far-famed and much-prized bathing-place. Play was high, dancing, concerts, theatres, riding and driving parties, were nightly and daily in full force, and pleasure in a thousand different ways attracted the pleasure-seekers of every country and of every class. It seemed as if this season the beautiful bathing resort outshone every other place in the variety of its lavish

amusements, and in the fascination of its numerous enjoyments. Health and fortune, generally so jealously guarded, were here looked upon as trifles hardly worth accounting for. Money changed hands in the most reckless manner, and from morning till night, and often far into the next day, the forgetfulness of the moment in pleasure and in pleasure only, was the ruling passion which possessed every one, old and young alike. One morning, at the height of the season, every promenade was crowded with people. Youth, beauty, rank, and fashion, from every part of Europe, were lounging about, enjoying the soft balmy air, to refresh them after the dissipation of the previous evening.

Close by stood the Kursaal. In one of the large beautiful rooms leading from the gaming-saloon, stood two young men earnestly talking. Every now and then one of them would walk backwards and

forwards up and down the room, which was empty of its usual visitors. He was a tall, well-made man, with broad shoulders and fully developed chest—he looked healthy and strong. His head was small, with short brown curling hair, broad forehead, deep shining eyes, and a fair complexion. His teeth were beautifully white, and the full mouth had an expression of kindness and decision, which, together with the straight nose, gave the face a decided and manly character, and the shaven chin proclaimed his English birth.

His whole appearance and manner clearly showed him to be a genuine gentleman. His hands were white, but too large to belong to a dandy. His companion was a true type of the handsome aristocrat—a tall, slight figure, very regular features, with hands and feet small. Every movement and action bespoke the refined worldly gentleman. His hair and whiskers were light

brown, and his complexion was as white and pink as a girl's of fifteen—and the clear, deep blue eyes could not possibly have been owned by any other than an Englishman.

"Lord Casterton," he said, when the other stopped his walk up and down the room for a moment, "I tell you it is really true the marchioness sent for me at Coblentz, and then I came on here with her. If you doubt, go to the Hotel Fenix, and you will find her there."

"But what did she come here for?" asked Edwin Casterton. "Won't you tell me, Lembourn?"

"Yes, I'll tell you, for it is just that and that only that made me hunt you up, and then you doubt what I say just to escape hearing what is not pleasant."

"I see you haven't laid aside your old habit of preaching," laughingly answered Edwin. "Do it now, and tell me in a few words what the marchioness wants."

"She wants you to marry at once."

Edwin stood still, and looked at Sir Sidney Lembourn with an expression on his face that made them both laugh. After a moment he added:

"I don't want to imagine that my aunt has lost her senses. Only her wish for me to marry at once, looks as if a screw were loose somewhere here," and he touched his forehead. "But let me hear the reason why I must don the marriage yoke?"

"To repair your fortune. She hopes that you at last see that you have nothing but empty coffers."

"On my honour I see it. My bankers told me so long ago, and that was why I left England. Ah, my estates are heavily mortgaged, and I hardly believe I could draw a single pound by my name! But if my lady aunt thinks I shall marry to get out of my difficulties, she's just mistaken. I have not squandered my fortune, it was already gone before I inherited it. I am

determined not to sell my freedom and my honour to restore it."

"The marchioness does not ask you to marry for money. The lady you choose may be poor and unknown, but no Frenchwoman; only get married."

"Really! my amiable aunt hates the French still, I see. But let me hear what benefit I am to reap if I do as she wishes."

"Well! I'll tell you. We all know how immensely rich she is, and that her passionate love for your father followed him to his death, but that does not make you her heir without a will. She wishes you, and you only, to possess her gold and estates. But besides that, she has a fancy to pay up all those mortgages on your family property, free your father's name from the shadow hanging over it, of having fooled those who lent him money; pay all his debts, and restore your estates free of encumbrance of every kind; in short, make you in lands,

as well as person, a worthy representative of the oldest and proudest name among our English aristocracy. And all this she will do, if you will only promise that by the first of next September, you will have married a young and amiable girl, and will bring her to Harton Court, and there pass the September month with your lady aunt."

Sidney was silent. He watched Edwin's earnest face closely, as he slowly walked by his side up and down the room. After a few turns getting no answer, Sidney quietly asked, "Shall I tell you what I think of this affair?"

"Yes," assented Edwin eagerly, "for you always reason with honour and truth and judgment."

"My decision of the case is limited to how Lord Casterton ought to act to restore the glory to a name which has ever been connected with all honour in English history. A spot on this name has arisen be-

cause the last owner of it borrowed money he could not pay, to enjoy himself in the world, and by recklessness not only ruined himself, but many besides, who had trusted to the unblemished honour of his name and the nobility of his house. It is a shame that the honour of such a family should be tarnished! Those estates are mortgaged, and the property ruined, being in the hands of people without truth or feeling, who extort interest on money which ought never to have been raised. If *I*, Sir Sidney Lembourn, possessed such estates, and my father had such a shadow on his name, I would accept the very first offer that would with honour allow me to try and clear the debts from the estates, and the memory of my father from the slightest shadow."

Again he was silent: and the two young men continued their walk for some moments ere Edwin said:

"How long does my aunt stay here?"

"Only till she receives your answer. The first of September you must be married, or everything between you is at an end."

"But really I can't understand what my marriage has to do with it? If my father's memory is to be saved, surely she can do it without any conditions. Why should I marry? I can't see!"

Sidney did not answer.

"You know the motive which makes her act in this way," continued Edwin.

"Maybe! The first is your passion for the Countess Mourville, and also the wandering life you lead, and she thinks that if you were married and settled down on your father's estates, that you would take an Englishman's interest in public affairs, and lead a quiet orderly life, and give up all your bizarre ideas, and become an earnest practical member of society."

"The pith of all you say, my dear Lembourn is, that my dear aunt hates the

countess so cordially, that she would give up all her fortune to pain the little woman, and she believes that the surest way to give this pain, would be to separate us. Ah, yes! my aunt is as much to be feared as an enemy, as to be respected as a friend."

As he spoke he went to the window and looked at the promenaders. The band was playing a lively air. Sidney stood by his side, and putting one hand on his friend's shoulder, he asked:

"Well, Casterton, have you decided?"

Edwin's face was very earnest. The eyebrows were drawn tightly together, and his mouth had a pained proud expression, as he said:

"Has my aunt delegated you to receive my answer?"

"Yes she has, but she also wishes to speak to you herself."

"That I wish to spare her and myself too. If we met now I could not restrain myself

from saying a few bitter words as I did last time I met her, and then I should be sorry perhaps, for although she hated my mother, she loved my father so well and fondly she forgot all thought of herself. She has often given me proof of it, and I have no right to be angry with her. It is far best I give you my answer."

The young man gave a deep sigh.

"And this answer, what is it?" asked Sidney, anxiously.

"That on the first of September I will be at Harton Court, with my wife. Not a word more now, Lembourn, on this subject! I see there is the countess, I must go and talk to her;" and Edwin grasped his friend's hand, and springing lightly through the open window, he hastened to join a group of loungers, amongst which was the young and beautiful Countess Mourville, his cousin on the mother's side.

Sidney turned on his heel and crossed the room, to go out in the gaming-saloon, but was stopped in the doorway by a little shrunken man, accompanied by a young lady, whose beautiful face—as his eyes rested on her for a second—chained him to the spot. She put him in mind of a half-blown moss rose, so fresh and sweet and soft was her whole appearance; and though an artist would have said her features were too irregular for her face to be called beautiful, yet as he looked at her, Sidney's eyes brightened, and his heart beat with pleasure, as he moved back for her to pass. The language she spoke to the old man was unknown to Sidney; although he knew most of the European tongues.

The young lady's dress was simple in style, but elegant and costly in every detail, and her carriage and bearing betokened such refinement and ease, as only are to be met with in the highest society. As she and

her companion left the saloon, the Englishman after a moment's hesitation took up his hat, and followed them out to the public promenade.

## CHAPTER V.

WILHELM STRASSE is a long straight street with old and new houses on both sides. About the middle stands a new, large, handsome palace, four stories high, with beautiful balconies filled with flowers, and ornamented in a most costly manner, with all the talent the builder's art and architect's imagination could devise. This house belonged to a Frenchman, a Monsieur d'Orbean.

To what profession M. d'Orbean belonged, and how he had gained his fortune, were things quite unknown. That he was immensely rich, all acknowledged. Everything

in his house was luxurious and costly, he gave brilliant entertainments, and was considered the most perfect of hosts. He had a young, handsome wife, and in his drawing-rooms were to be met all the rich, beautiful ladies, and gentlemen of rank and fashion.

It was whispered by a countryman of his, that M. d'Orbean was an adventurer from Anjou, who made his money at the gaming tables and by match-making; as soon as he had gained enough money he left France, and went from one place to another, increasing his fortune till he finally took up his residence in Wiesbaden. Here he built himself this beautiful house, and married a handsome French girl. It was also whispered that he still carried on his matrimonial agency—although secretly—for the rich and elegant world. If a rich but ugly woman wished to marry, she had only to be introduced in M. d'Orbean's house, and before the season was over, she was

sure to be engaged. If a mother had beautiful girls without fortune, she had only to travel to Wiesbaden, make the acquaintance of the Frenchman, and very soon her daughters would be promised in marriage to rich men, and often to men of noble rank. This was not certainly openly acknowledged and known, but the results were the same, and his house was the resort of all the fashionable world visiting Wiesbaden. The upper part of his enormous house he let for the season, to one or two families, who preferred a private house to an hotel.

One morning the world had grown weary of walking and drinking the waters, and one and all had retired indoors.

In an apartment, beautifully furnished as a library and writing-room, sat the famous Frenchman. His eyes wandered constantly to a magnificent clock standing on the mantel-shelf. Just as the hands

pointed to twelve, a door opened, the curtains were moved aside, and a servant in a brilliant gold livery announced

"Lord Casterton!"

Edwin walked in. He returned the low bow of his host with a slight nod of his head, and sat down in a large easy-chair, and looking at his watch, said:

"You have had to wait a whole hour for me, but I couldn't help it."

"My lord, it's always an honour for me when you deign to step over my threshold," answered the amiable Frenchman. "And I was so pleased at your visit to me that I did not mind waiting."

"And I, monsieur, may say," replied Edwin, "that you never would have had that honour, if I were not obliged to marry in a hurry. When I begged you to await my coming I intimated to you that I required your help to find a wife. I wish to know if you can do it?"

"Certainly I can if——"

"One moment," broke in Edwin; "I promise it shall be a good thing for you, if you only get me a girl such as I wish for."

"My lord, I don't doubt it; but I do wonder that *you* require my help to find such a one as you seek."

"Don't wonder any more, monsieur, but have the goodness to listen to me. I have only one hour to spare—at two I have an engagement."

"I am all ears," said the Frenchman.

"Well! I want to meet with a lady of seventeen or eighteen *well brought up*, and of *irreproachable character*. She need not be well born. She must be neither French nor English, and it does not matter about fortune."

"Really!" exclaimed D'Orbean, as he glanced at the young man, for he knew that Casterton was ruined.

"Yes, monsieur, she may be as poor as

Edwin Casterton is at the present moment, for as soon as the priest has united her fate to his, that same day her husband will be again as rich as his forefathers were."

"But she must be beautiful?" asked D'Orbean.

"She need only have a face that will not shame Lady Casterton. For the rest, it is immaterial," he answered carelessly.

"My lord's pretensions are so small that it will not be difficult to meet them. Youth and virtue, it's not much."

"But these two conditions are indispensable," said Edwin, smiling, as he rose to go. "In a few days I must be engaged, and in two months married."

"This evening I shall have the honour of presenting to my lord three young ladies, each possessing the desired qualities. My lord can choose from them."

"Present to me!" exclaimed Edwin, shrugging his shoulders. "Why I hoped I need not be bothered till the moment when the contract would have to be signed and——"

"But, my lord——"

"I know what you will say—but I will see the ladies, only not in your drawing-room. To-morrow, 'Don Juan' is given. Arrange for them to go. I will be there, and you can point them out to me. Farewell—we meet again to-morrow evening, then, at the theatre." Edwin went to the door.

"One word more, my lord—will it matter if the lady has a fortune?"

The Englishman turned and looked at D'Orbean as he asked,

"Why do you want to know?"

"Because there is here in the town a young, charming, and well-educated lady, the daughter of a merchant, who most

earnestly desires to marry a man with a great name. The father is not strong, the mother dead, and the girl seems to have no relatives. She is proud, and longs with a kind of burning thirst to enjoy the delights of rank. Her father spoke to me about her, and said that for his child's happiness he gave his consent to her wish, all the more so as he felt he should not live long."

"Will the girl marry without affection, only and entirely to gain a great name?"

"Entirely."

"Then she will do for me. The one cannot condemn the other. I will see her. She can keep her gold, I don't want it. But I will give her my name in exchange for her consenting to be my wife within the two months. That's splendid! What nation is she?"

"Swedish."

"First-rate! Then to-morrow at the play

I will see her; if she pleases me you shall present me there and then."

And Edwin, with a pleasant nod of his head, opened the door and left the room.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE next evening the theatre was full of beautifully dressed ladies, with gentlemen standing or sitting near them. Edwin was there. He seemed to pay no attention to any one, and not once did he lift his opera-glass to his eyes, but looked straight before him with his arms folded, and lost in thought. Presently he felt his shoulder touched; turning quickly round he encountered M. d'Orbean's smiling face.

"In the second box on the left," he whispered, and drew himself back without another word.

Edwin raised his glass, and pointed it towards the place mentioned.

In the box sat two persons, the elder a little, shrivelled, bent man with a yellow skin and gray hair, the other a young, graceful, blooming girl with a look about her that made one think of a spring morning. Her face was very sweet and fresh, with an innocent, pure expression about the mouth which, when she smiled, gave to her countenance a considerable amount of fascination.

"She is really charming with that faultless brow and graceful carriage!" thought Edwin, after he had taken a long look at her. "What a pity such a beautiful child should have a heart so corrupt that only pride and vanity have any place there. Bah! what does it matter? I am as bad; I marry solely to repair my fortune and to give back to my name its ancient glory. What is that but pride and vanity?"

After the second act, M. d'Orbean presented Lord Casterton to Mr. and Mademoiselle Bromér, with a few amiable words, and then left the box to attend to other affairs.

Herr Bromér could only speak a very little French, barely enough to make himself understood; but his daughter spoke it fluently and easily. She did not talk much, but whatever she said was expressed in a way that gave to the most trivial subject a charm and fascination peculiarly her own. Edwin grew pleased and interested as he glanced from time to time at the fresh girlish face before him, and for a moment forgot, as he watched her smile, the cold worldly object of his being there, and the compact he was about to enter upon for the sole purpose of redeeming his lost estates.

Presently, at the end of the third act he rose up, and said to Herr Bromér:

"Would you like to join a riding party to-morrow, arranged by Mdme. d'Orbean, to visit Johannisberg? If you will, perhaps you will allow me to be mademoiselle's cavalier and send you horses?"

Herr Bromér quietly replied, "I never ride; but my daughter is going, as she has been invited by Mdme. d'Orbean."

"Then I shall see you to-morrow," said Edwin, as he bowed and left the box. He went straight to Sidney's hotel, but he found M. Lembourn had gone with the Marchioness Brissier to Coblentz that very afternoon.

The next day, early in the morning, an elegant riding party left Wiesbaden. Among them rode Edwin and Elvira side by side. They talked on a thousand indifferent subjects, and Elvira began to think the big young fellow who managed his restive horse so easily was a very amiable and agreeable companion, although he never

allowed the conversation to turn for one second upon himself, or anything connected with his past or present life.

The far-famed Johannisberg was reached, the beautiful view stretching for miles around was duly admired, lunch was eaten, the horses rested, and in the cool of the afternoon the return journey began. Edwin rode silently by Elvira's side. Suddenly he asked her,

"Did M. d'Orbean tell you why I made your acquaintance?" and he looked at her earnestly as he spoke.

The blood mounted hot and red in the girl's cheeks. For a moment she hesitated—should she tell him the truth or not? But her nature was honest, and after a second she answered slowly,

"He did tell me."

"Thank you for that answer, which gives me a genuine proof of your truthful character, and I am sure you will not hesitate,

either, to give me a decided answer to what I now ask you. Will you put your future in my hands? give me your hand and share my name?"

"My lord, I have only known you a few hours, and——" pleaded Elvira.

"Do you think you would know me better in a few months?" he asked.

"I hope so," she stammered.

"Then you mistake; my character, with all its faults and merits, would be as unknown to you then as now. If you have not the courage to decide now, you will not need it in a year. I must have your answer to-day or never again do we meet. In two days I leave Wiesbaden."

Elvira was silent, and very agitated. How and what could she answer? The only wish she was conscious of was to be away anywhere rather than where she now found herself, with those cold, earnest eyes fixed on her face waiting for her to speak.

"How am I to interpret your silence?" Edwin continued after a while, as his tone grew slightly impatient. "Do you hesitate to utter a simple *Yes* or *No?* I must have one or the other from your lips ere we part. To-day I beg the honour of your hand, but if you refuse I shall say farewell to you without regret or bitterness; but you *must* decide. Marriage is at all times a game of hazard; winning or losing is decided by chance."

"I hardly know if your words are true or not," said Elvira, turning her face from him as he paused, "but I feel I must have a day or two to think over what you say."

"If you 'think over' it you will refuse. You had better far at once say a gentle *No.*"

"But I am not sure I want to say No," Elvira answered unwillingly. And then checking herself, she blushed scarlet, and

wondered if any one was ever so puzzled and troubled before.

"Is it so difficult to say *Yes?* It's only a little word," urged Edwin, smiling.

"I don't know. I must speak with my father before I decide," she answered, hardly above her breath. "To-morrow you shall have my answer, not before." And giving a hasty touch to her horse, she galloped forward and joined Mdme. d'Orbean.

The next morning Edwin naturally expected to see Elvira on the promenade. But she did not come. Presently Mdme. d'Orbean with two or three young ladies passed near him. She turned, stood still, and handing him a paper said:

"I promised to give you this from Mdlle. Bromér."

Edwin took it from her hand and unfolded it there and then. It contained merely one word, "*Yes.*"

But that one word was enough; he fully understood all it implied and the duty it imposed on him at once. With a sigh and a slight contraction of the lips he bowed his acknowledgments to Mdme. d'Orbean, and turning, joined a group a few yards farther off. The Countess Mourville was amongst them. He drew her aside from her companions and walked silently by her side up to the hotel where she was staying. In her little sitting-room facing the gardens he had a long and serious conversation with her. When an hour after the beautiful woman gave him her hand in farewell, her eyes were full of tears as in a broken voice she said with an attempt at firmness:

"Dear friend, I feel as if I shall die of grief, but hard as it is I will not say one word to dissuade you from the step you have taken. Try and be happy, and—try to forget me!"

Edwin pressed the little hand tight in his as he murmured entreatingly,

"Let me say one word more of farewell ere I travel."

"What good will it do? Our paths separate *now*. Our short happy dream is over—over for ever. My prayers will follow you, Edwin."

And the young countess drew her hand away and left the room.

Edwin's heart was very heavy as, with slow, unwilling steps, he went down the hotel stairs. He had done his duty, but it had been a hard struggle, and the reward had no attraction for him. Tears in a beautiful woman's eyes, soft gentle words from loving, passionate lips, are weapons so dangerous; the stoutest and strongest man's heart shrinks from encountering them unless driven in honour to fight against them. Edwin, as he wended his way in the most solitary road he could

find, felt that never was the countess so dear to him as in the moment when he had to tear himself away from her presence and put her for ever out of his heart. An hour or two passed ere he was calm enough to retrace his steps to the town and seek the father of his future wife. That interview over, he passed an hour in Elvira's drawing-room, bade her farewell and arranged to meet her, as Bromér and he had decided, two months later in Copenhagen, when the wedding was to take place as quietly as possible. In the meantime he begged the engagement might be kept a secret, and not be mentioned to any one, at least till they met again the day before the marriage. And pressing a cold kiss on the young girl's hand, he left her without a word of endearment, or one single expression of even outward interest.

That night he wrote to his friend Sidney Lembourn:

"You can tell my aunt I have chosen my bride. At the given time I shall be at Harton Court with my young wife, and I hope that the sacrifice I have made of my freedom to win back the glory of my family, will content the marchioness. The sacrifice is so great it ought to make her forget all past sorrows. The future alone will show if my aunt has forced me to my life's joy or sorrow. The man has been sacrificed for the noble, and affection for pride.

"One good only has my lady aunt's ultimatum as yet achieved, she has made me think over my life. It stood in her power to retrieve our name from all its lost grandeur by one act. She chose to make me do it myself, and I have determined to make myself a worthy representative of my name. The future will see I am in earnest. At Harton Court we

shall meet, I hope, and then you shall learn to know the wife chosen by

"Your sincere friend,

"EDWIN CASTERTON."

The next morning Edwin left Wiesbaden. A week after, Sidney returned, and his first care was to try and find the winsome face which had so interested him the only time he had seen it as he left the Kursaal the day before his departure with the marchioness for Coblentz.

For two whole days he had paced up and down every promenade, in and out of every gallery, and into every place of amusement he thought the charming unknown would be likely to frequent. But all in vain, nowhere could he see a face approaching the sweet freshness of the one he sought.

One evening he went into the gaming saloon and had just thrown down a few gold pieces and was watching their fate,

when he saw close to him a woman with a face and features so perfectly beautiful as to attract universal admiration. Her dress was most costly, and she was accompanied by a young man who was in figure and face as handsome as herself. The pair passed Sidney, and the lady sat down on a chair by the table as her companion stood behind her. Curiosity to watch what effects the chance of play would have on such a beautiful face, chained Sidney to the spot.

At first she cast her gold on the table and followed it with an expression of eagerness, but soon her whole soul became interested, and it might be seen she played with passion and forgot everything else around her, in the eagerness to see whether she won or lost.

As Sidney was watching the beautiful face so wrapt in the chance of the game, three persons entered the saloon and drew

near to where Sidney was standing. They were an elderly man, a young girl, and M. d'Orbean.

The man raised himself on his toes, and from over the shoulder of the one in front of him threw a few guldens on the table, saying as he did so,

"Come nearer, Elvira, and see how money is lost in this miserable amusement."

The girl cast a curious glance over the table, and she saw that Bromér had won. Again he put money down and won, and then a third, and a fourth, and a fifth time. And each time he won his interest increased. Elvira had her hand on his arm, and she felt his whole body trembling. She looked at him, and his face frightened her. His eyes followed the gold as it lay on the table with a half-mad eagerness in their expression, and his mouth and hands were twitching convulsively.

Elvira whispered anxiously,

"Come, let us go, I have seen enough."

But he heard nothing, only withdrew his arm from her hold and stretched more forward.

Elvira urged him again. "Do come now;" but he was deaf to her entreaty. Then she turned to M. d'Orbean.

"Do try, monsieur, and persuade my father to leave the table. The play is agitating him, and the doctor has forbidden all emotion."

She spoke aloud in her distress, and her voice was so anxious that Sidney turned to see who spoke, for the first time taking his eyes from the beautiful face on the other side, and fixing them on his neighbour.

And the face he had sought for days was there close to him!

D'Orbean whispered a few words to Bromér, but he took no notice. Elvira's eyes filled with tears as she faltered,

"For Heaven's sake get him away, monsieur, or he will have another stroke."

Sidney heard, and touching Bromér's arm he said authoritatively,

"Sir, your daughter is ill."

In a moment Bromér turned his head and looked at Elvira, who was as pale as death.

The spell for play was broken. He took a few steps backwards, staggered, and would have fallen if Sidney had not caught him in his arms.

His face was drawn, he foamed at the mouth, and his whole frame seemed convulsed.

There was a grand stir. Every one around moved from the table to help the sick man whom Sidney had carried to a sofa at the side. Even the beautiful woman's companion left his chair to go and see what was the matter. In a moment he returned.

"Has some one fainted?" she asked, without taking her eyes from the play.

"It's an old man in a fit," answered her companion.

"What man? Who is he?" she asked.

"A countryman of ours, a Swede."

"What's his name?"

"Bromér."

The lady, who had hitherto not moved her eyes for one second from the green cloth, turned suddenly round and looked angrily at the young man by her side, as she answered proudly—

"Oh! that's Elvira's father, the old clothesman. I hoped that *here* we should have been spared meeting such people."

Just as she spoke Bromér was carried from the room, and Elvira heard her words as she passed out near her father. She was frightened and troubled at what had just happened, and the words smote on her ear in a familiar voice, and she looked up to see who

uttered them. Her eyes fell on the beautiful slanderer, and she recognized in a second—*Martha.* A moment after Elvira was out of the room ere she had time to notice who the man was standing near her old rival.

Bromér was ill for a long time, and Elvira nursed him night and day. She would not leave him till he had quite recovered, and was able to sit up for some hours every morning.

In the meantime Sidney came to know *her* whose face had haunted him from the first moment he set eyes on it. He came daily to visit the sick man he had befriended in the gaming-saloon, and by his bedside he saw Elvira in the most favourable light, that of a loving child and a tender nurse.

The first time he met her on the promenade after her father's illness, she held out her hand to him, saying smilingly—

"Sir Sidney, to-day I am very happy; papa has been out a little way, and feels really better."

And from that day Sidney never left Elvira's side, as often as he could make excuse to be with her.

One morning he went with her and Mdme. d'Orbean to the reading-rooms. Returning, they passed through the gaming-saloon. At the table sat the same beautiful woman Sidney had noticed before, and by her side the same handsome man. Elvira's eyes fell upon them, and as they did so she seized hold of Mdme. d'Orbean's arm, and seemed as if she could not move. The gentleman standing by Martha at the same moment saw her. He started, then recovering himself bowed low, and the next moment Elvira was gone.

Out in the air Elvira revived. Sidney was silent for a while; he had noticed the emotion of Elvira and the start of surprise

in the gentleman near Martha. Presently he said suddenly—

"Will you allow me to ask you a question, which may appear curious, but—— who was that young man you bowed to?"

"A countryman of mine called Brogren," she answered, with some surprise.

"And is that lovely woman his wife?" continued Sidney.

"That I don't know, but she is the daughter of a Count Stangenskjöld."

"Ah, monsieur, you are speaking of that handsome Swedish pair," interrupted Mdme. d'Orbean. "They are just betrothed. She is very rich and of high rank—he is neither, but he has managed to win her beautiful hand. Her mother is ill and is here for her health, but I am afraid the Countess Stangenskjöld is doomed to die."

"Stangenskjöld!" repeated some one behind them.

All three turned, and saw an old man with snow-white hair passing along.

Elvira hardly listened to Mdme. d'Orbean, she was thinking of Martha's contemptuous words uttered the day her father was taken ill—"I hoped that *here* we should have been spared meeting such people," and the bitterness of their smart was far, far greater than any irritation she felt for Carl's engagement with the beautiful high-born girl.

She tried to comfort herself with the thought that in a very few weeks she also would be as high, if not much higher, in rank and fortune than her rival, and be surrounded with wealth and position that even the beautiful Martha would envy. Then, too, she remembered that by her side was Sir Sidney Lembourn, one of the most admired of young men, and most sought after in the best society of Wiesbaden. And with a child's delight and

a girl's pride she told herself that Martha, even in that trying moment, must have seen how attentive and devoted he was to her.

During the time Elvira was in Wiesbaden and daily in constant intercourse with Sidney, her mind developed in intelligence, and she learnt to know herself better in those few weeks than she had ever done before.

She was only seventeen, with as yet a child's simple faith in the reality and beauty of the unknown future. This faith deepened and grew stronger as she received, almost imperceptibly, the daily guidance and influence of Sidney's earnest and more religious nature. He enjoyed watching her ideas unfold till they developed into perfect bloom, knowing, as he did, that it was from him she learned to mould her thoughts and to express the truth dormant in her soul, and the more he

knew of her the more his interest in her increased, till at last he knew that he loved her truly and for ever.

"Fate must have thrown her across my path to tell me that the other half of my soul was not of necessity born to my own rank. The woman I love is noble of mind and thought, and worthy of any rank, even, because *I* love her. What matter that her name is unknown? If I can only win her heart she shall bear my name," thought the young man, as he sat alone one day after a long happy morning in Elvira's society.

He had never belonged to those who care only for a beautiful face. Polite and amiable towards women he ever was. In London and Paris his name was quoted as one of the most elegant and desirable "partis" in the higher circles. But beautiful women called him "stony-hearted," and not one could boast she had succeeded in

awakening his interest so far as to win even one word of affection or one look of love.

And this was the man who knew that he loved Elvira with a deep and lasting attachment.

If she had learnt to know him immediately after her childish passion for Carl was so cruelly crushed, it is most likely she would have renounced her childish yearning for rank and position, and returned his affection as ardently as he could wish. Now it was too late, all her feelings had been wounded by that bitter delusion, and to be a great lady with a brilliant name was the one longing of her whole soul. To this she was ready to sacrifice her ideal of happiness, and all else she held dear. For this purpose she had come to Wiesbaden, and when a week went by and no lover presented himself, she became impatient. Bromér also earnestly desired to obtain

for her a brilliant marriage. He spoke to M. d'Orbean, and with the result we have seen.

In the meantime as the weeks slipped by Elvira's friendship for Sidney awoke in her at times an uneasiness as to the wisdom of the step she had taken, but an hour after it would pass away as she remembered the position which awaited her, and her womanly pride was excited and her self-love flattered at the thought of being the wife of such a noble lord, and the mistress of so many estates.

Sometimes when Sidney touched upon the subject of the duty we owe one another in our daily intercourse in life, Elvira had an ardent longing to confide in him, and ask him if the bond she had so willingly accepted with Lord Casterton were right or wrong, for she felt instinctively she had set her foot on a wrong path, but each time she was about to tell him of her

engagement, Edwin's injunction to silence restrained her.

More than ever as the time drew near to the marriage, did Elvira long for a friend and counsellor. She wished the promise had never been given which bound her to silence, so that she might speak out her thoughts, and tell Sidney of the future which awaited her.

One thing she determined upon, that after her marriage she would have him for her best friend, to advise her in all things, how to act and which path to pursue under all difficulties. She comforted herself that he would often be in England, where her home would henceforth be. Ah, yes! all should go well when once she was married! She would be a sweet obedient wife, and try in all things to please her husband. He must love her, for he had already a great passion for her, and she must be

happy. Why not? Ah! there the doubt crept in, for her conscience told her she had betrayed her heart for her pride, and could her husband, who knew why she had said "yes," respect her? But she stifled her doubts, and would not listen to them, at seventeen life seems so bright and full of hope. Surely she could make him love her; love her, too, so tenderly and truly, that he would forget all the past. She would surround him with affection, grow to care for and love him herself so deeply and passionately, that he would not be able to treat her coldly, or look at her again so indifferently. Ah, yes! life by his side *must* be happy when once they learned to know each other better.

And she was so occupied with her thoughts of making her grand husband care for her, and of her unfolding affection for him, she did not notice that each day Sidney's manner became warmer in cha-

racter, or that it was possible the man she regarded as a kind, brotherly friend, was fast wrapping around her the whole love of his rich and earnest nature.

## CHAPTER VII.

TIME rolled on; the season was just over; a day or two more, and the hotels would stand empty, and the baths be shut up. Sidney was sitting by Elvira in the drawing-room. He looked sad and thoughtful.

"A few days more and we shall have to part, perhaps never to meet again," he said abruptly, after a silence.

"Why not meet again?" said Elvira, astonished.

"Because that depends entirely on you," he said, half unwillingly.

"In that case we shall meet often again,"

she replied, smiling sweetly. "I can assure you we shall not be separated long."

At that moment Bromér entered the room, and Sidney took his leave.

"Here is a letter for you from your future husband," said her father, as soon as they were alone. "In three days he will be in Copenhagen and await our arrival for the wedding. To-morrow morning we must leave Wiesbaden."

She took the letter, and as she turned it in her hand she was both startled and glad.

So soon! the time had slipped away so quickly!

In the afternoon Elvira went for the last time to the spring. On the road she met Carl and his betrothed. As they passed her she heard Martha say,

"I have told you before, dear Carl, that I don't like you to bow to that girl. Such acquaintances ought to be dropped now."

The blood rushed to Elvira's cheeks, and

her heart beat with anger as she muttered to herself, "Only a few days and I shall be higher than you, young lady, and you won't dare to hurt me again."

Just at that moment Sidney came up, and noticing her disturbed countenance, inquired what was the matter as he shook hands, and turned with her.

"Something I heard a moment ago that upset me, but 'tis past now. I am glad to have met you, for I wanted to tell you that to-morrow we start for Berlin."

"Why so suddenly?" asked Sidney, taken aback.

"My father had a letter to day which obliges us to go."

"And you leave Wiesbaden without regret?" he said as he gazed at the young girl sadly.

"Wiesbaden, yes—but not you. I am sorry to leave you so suddenly," she added as she smilingly looked up in his face.

At this moment Mdme. d'Orbean joined them, which appearance Sidney seemed to resent, for after a few words of amiability to the elder lady, he turned again to Elvira, and said in English: "You are very kind, Miss Bromér. I understand now you have only friendship for me. I had hoped for more."

"You have my sincere friendship, Sir Sidney, and in the short time we shall be separated I shall miss you greatly, I know."

"Short time!" repeated Sidney. "How do you know it will be short?"

"In a few weeks we shall meet again, I am quite sure."

"And if we meet, how will you greet me?" asked Sidney as his face brightened.

"With as much pleasure as it now gives me pain to say adieu."

"My dear," broke in Mdme. d'Orbean, "you forget I don't understand English.

It's scarcely amiable of you," she added, turning to Sidney.

"Pardon, madame, one moment more and I am at your service. Miss Elvira, let me see you this evening once more, and I will then tell you if I will follow you to Berlin, or go direct from here to England."

"Certainly," answered Elvira, simply, and the next turn bringing her opposite her hotel, she left them both, and went in. Later in the evening she awaited his coming. She felt, she hardly knew why, that sorrow was at hand. And her heart beat unusually quick as she heard his step in the outer room.

He came up to her and took her two hands in his.

"Miss Elvira, I have three words to say, perhaps you will guess them; but I could not let you go without asking you how it is. You know I care for you?"

"You have been a kind friend to me, Sir

Sidney," answered Elvira, as the colour mounted to her brow.

"You know you are dear to me," he interrupted—"these few weeks in which I have seen you every day have shown me that life without you will be very empty, and that I love you as I have never yet loved any woman, and never can again. Can you—do you love me?"

He waited for her answer, but she was silent. Her cheek was pale and her head was turned from him. She had never dreamed of this. That he should love her more than as a sister—friend, had not for one moment entered her thoughts during the whole of the past happy six weeks. And now he stood before her, begging her for that which she had not in her power to give. It flashed through her mind and cut her to the quick to remember, she had been unconsciously encouraging, and giving false and useless hopes to his desires. She dared

not answer. She felt rather than saw the warm, eager, passionate look in his eyes, and knew that the word she must in a moment bring herself to say would send him from her a broken and disappointed man. Her one friend, the one before all others upon whom she had counted to advise and help her in the new life before her.

"Will you be my wife?" he went on in a voice full of emotion, as he took her cold hand in his. "Have you any affection for me—will you—can you love me so well that you will share with me the thorns as well as——"

"Oh! Sir Sidney, what can I say?" at last she uttered as the tears rolled down her cheeks. "I had no idea of this—six weeks ago it would have made me happy, but *now* —oh no! I cannot, I must not—it would not be right."

"What cannot be? what is not right?" he pleaded as he tried to draw her near to him.

But she drew back, and said firmly and gently—

"My future is already decided—for that reason I am going away now from Wiesbaden. If it could have been six weeks ago. Then—ah, then it might have been different. I am sorry, deeply sorry;" and she raised her face, wet with tears, entreatingly to his as she added, "Try and forget me, though I shall ever think of you as the noblest and best of men. If only I might tell you all; but I have promised to be silent."

"Tell me nothing," he said, but his voice was broken and sad. "My dream is over. God bless you, and may you be as happy as I would have tried to make you. Farewell!" and pressing her hands tight in his again, he stooped and lightly kissed her hair and vanished from the room.

The next morning Elvira, Bromér, and Lotta left Wiesbaden.

A few hours after their arrival in Copenhagen, Lord Casterton paid them a visit.

He greeted Elvira kindly but coldly, inquired after the journey and if she were tired, and after a few remarks on indifferent subjects, he asked Bromér if he had fixed the day for the marriage contract to be signed.

Elvira's heart beat wildly. She dared not lift her eyes.

Bromér said that the following Saturday would be best, as that would enable him to leave Copenhagen the same afternoon; but Edwin expressed a wish to have it done earlier, and suggested the following day. Turning to Elvira, he added politely—"I refer the question to you—as you decide so shall it be."

She looked up, and as she did so she caught her father's eye. The expression she read there was full of love, and seemed

to say—"Child, don't be too quick in giving me up."

She understood and answered, "My wish is to have it as my father says." As she spoke she looked at her lover, and there was something so cold and indifferent in the expression of his face, that her heart was chilled, and she felt wretched and ill.

"On Saturday, so be it!" and he rose up, adding, "To-morrow, I will call early in the morning to see what you would like to do during the day. You are tired now, so I will withdraw." He kissed her hand and went.

As the door closed on him, she felt inclined to burst into tears. Why she could not imagine, but she felt that she could not look upon her marriage in the same light now, as she did before she knew Sidney. She said "Good-night," to her father.

"Are you sure of being happy as Lady Casterton, my darling?" he asked, as he kissed her.

"Ah, yes! why not? how could I be unhappy as the wife of such a handsome man?"

But as she answered, she longed to lay her head on her father's shoulders and cry her heart out, but she would not he should discover she was miserable.

Alone in her room her tears had their way, and long and heavily she wept; then drying her eyes she began comparing Edwin with Sidney.

"He loves me, I suppose. He must do so, or he would not have asked me to marry him, but why does he never say a word of affection to me? His love is not so tender as my friend Sidney's.

"I feel half afraid of my husband to be," she thought to herself. "He seems made to be obeyed and feared, but I will try and love him. He is great and good."

And she put her head on her pillow, and was soon asleep. Towards morning she

dreamt that Edwin took her up in his strong arms, and carried her up to a great height, and as soon as he reached the top, he threw her away into a great abyss. Just as she was falling, she felt herself seized by another pair of arms, and looking to see who saved her, she saw it was Sidney.

When she came down to breakfast, she found a beautiful nosegay of flowers, and a little étui, containing a costly set of jewels, awaiting her from her lover.

A few hours later he came himself, and was so kind and thoughtful, all her fears and misgivings disappeared, and she spent a happy day.

The next morning, Lord Casterton presented her with other costly gifts, and had a talk with Bromér about the settlements; Bromér informed him that he gave his daughter an estate he had just bought, and a large sum of money as his portion.

"I wish no dowry with my wife," said

Edwin, proudly. "Whatever you give your daughter, must be settled on herself. I will have nothing to do with it. I have here in this document, the dower which belongs by right to Lady Casterton. You can add to it if you wish, what you choose, but for her alone."

And to every entreaty of Bromér's, the young man was deaf, saying simply :

"I do not marry your daughter for her fortune, and I have no wish to thank her for anything of the kind."

After the interview, when Bromér told Elvira how obstinate Edwin had been, as regards not receiving a penny of her fortune, her eyes filled with tears of joy, for now she knew and was sure that Edwin loved her for herself alone, and that he would tell her so as soon as they were married.

On the day fixed, in the last week before September, and in the presence of four witnesses, Lord Edwin Casterton and Miss Elvira

Bromér, were married in the church of Vär Frälsares, in Copenhagen.

On the return of the bridal party, as they were sitting at dinner in the hotel, the garçon whispered to Bromér, that a gentleman desired to speak to him. With an apology, he rose and left the room. Half-an-hour after he came back with such a pale drawn face that Elvira sprang towards him, exclaiming:

"Is anything the matter? Are you ill?"

"Nothing, nothing, child," he answered hastily, as he took her arm, and led her to the window. "Do you see that man standing by the gas-lamp, with the blue coat? Look at him well, so as not to forget his features; and if you ever meet him, then be sure and remember his face."

She did as she was told.

In front of the hotel stood a man in a blue coat buttoned up to his chin. His eyes

seemed fixed on the window, where Bromér and his daughter stood. Elvira had no time to notice the face, before Edwin came to her side, saying, somewhat decidedly :

"If you will allow me, Lady Casterton, I will shut the window."

She turned her head towards him.

He shut the window, and then asked :

"Do you know the young man who is watching you with so much interest ?"

At the question, she drew near the window again, and looking out, her eyes fell upon Carl Brogren. He stood close to the man in the blue coat, under the lamp, and was staring up at her. As she caught sight of him, her colour changed, and she started back from the window.

"You must not be vexed with me, my lord, for exposing Elvira to those curious looks," remarked Herr Bromér in a low voice ; "but I wanted to show her to a man who is a relative of mine."

An hour later, and the father and daughter had separated.

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Lydia Marchioness Brissier was an Englishwoman, and a Casterton, and a cousin of William Casterton, Edwin's father.

Rich, beautiful, and related to William Casterton, she never for a moment doubted that the friendship her cousin gave her, was the same warm, true love she had had for him from childhood to womanhood, and that one day she would be his wife.

But she deceived herself. Affection he had for her, but not love, and when a year or two after he came of age, he wooed and won a fascinating French girl, Lydia felt the blow deeply, and thought her heart would break; but she kept her secret to herself. She married a few months afterwards the Marquis Brissier, the descendant of an old French family, long since natural-

ized Englishmen. Two years later he died, and left her a widow without children.

Young, immensely rich and very beautiful, she was surrounded with lovers, each eager to become the happy possessor of the charming young widow and her still more charming bank roll, but not one succeeded; and she remained as she was, a widow.

Her love for her cousin, which had been crushed by the knowledge that it was not returned, revived with double force when she heard that he was unhappy with his French wife, who was ruining him as fast as possible by her heedless extravagance and extortionate selfishness. The countess knew that William's fortune was already impaired, and that very soon it would be squandered into a thing of the past; and in her heart she resolved she would so husband her own large resources, that she would spare him if possible the humiliation

of leaving his only son a beggar, and himself a dishonoured man. For this end she lived quietly, and put by yearly large sums of her enormous fortune, and refused all offers of marriage.

Twenty years passed on, and Lady Casterton died. Hope sprang up again in Lydia's heart, and she thought, "Now I shall be rewarded for my faithful love," but again she was disappointed. A year had hardly gone by when he shot himself on finding out how hopelessly he was entangled in debt, besides not being able to procure an additional single shilling's advance on his heavily mortgaged estates. Ere he died he sent her a letter begging her to transfer the affection he knew she had for himself to his son, and telling her why he thought it best to escape his troubles by his own hand.

The marchioness grieved bitterly, and for a long time her reason was in danger.

When at last she became calm and able to think, her thought was for Edwin. He was at Oxford. Her desire was to adopt him as her own son, and lavish on him the wealth and the affection she had so many years cherished for his father. But his first visit to Harton Court put an end to all such hopes. She spoke bitterly of his dead mother, and he resented her words and would listen to nothing she urged for his own future, nor would he accept favours from the hand of one who could revile the mother he had loved with all a boy's passion, and blindness, and forgetfulness to the very faults which had made him a beggared nobleman, and cast him adrift on the world as the owner of mortgaged estates, and a proud yet overshadowed name.

The marchioness thought his conduct ungrateful, and they parted somewhat coldly. She did not offer to help him in

any less way, judging it would be best to let him struggle with his poverty till his pride was subdued.

He left England and roamed the Continent for a couple of years, at the end of which he returned to England to follow in his father's footsteps, and heavily mortgage the only corner of land which remained to him unencumbered. This done he went to Paris, and there fell in with a cousin on his mother's side, the Countess de Mourville. He soon learned to love her with a passionate and intense madness. To live near her was life—to be away death. He followed her to Italy, to the Tyrol, in fact wherever she went, till at last at the end of a year he came with her to Wiesbaden.

The marchioness knew of this passion for the countess, that all his resources were exhausted, and that he was now playing at the gaming-tables to raise money to

meet his current expenses. She determined to make one more effort to withdraw him from this worthless wandering life, and from the magic and fascination of his cousin's affection. In her estimation there was only one way to effect this, and that was to make him marry. To accomplish her wish she resolved she would spare no temptation, no expense, and no inducement to win him back to the land of his fathers, and the career to which he was entitled by birthright. She called Sidney Lembourn, his earliest and best loved friend, to her aid, and with him she left her home and travelled to Wiesbaden to execute her plans, that on the spot she might have more complete power to sway her young relative's mind, and lead him if possible to listen to her overtures of peace, and tempt him with offers of her goodwill and cheque-book to clear the shadowed name of his father, if only he would do as

she bid him, give up the countess and return to England.

Edwin was hasty and impulsive, with proud and passionate feelings, yet sensible and unselfish. He possessed good, calm, reflecting judgment, and the moment he determined that any course of action was the right one, no matter what the cost, he carried it out. He was brilliant and diversified in intellect, generous and independent and proud. He belonged to those who were not easily ruled, but very easily led. It required no little courage on Sidney's part to accept the mission entrusted to him by the marchioness. Proud without being haughty, aspiring but not presumptuous, clever but not pedantic, Sidney was in Edwin's eyes the ideal of a true honourable knightly gentleman, and his was the only opinion he ever listened to with deference, or whose advice he accepted or sought.

It was the end of August. Lydia Marchioness Brissier was at Harton Court, surrounded by a host of relatives and friends whom she had invited to meet Edwin and his bride, but without telling them the object of their visit. One of the wings of the noble building had been refurnished, more servants engaged, and she herself had laid aside the mourning dress she always wore for William Casterton, and appeared now in silver gray.

The dark massive old castle seemed full of life, and looked brighter in park and garden than it had done for many a long year.

As the last of August drew near, the marchioness seemed rather restless and anxious. Her eyes had an eager feverish expression in them, which betokened expectation of some unusual occurrence.

All the morning she looked from first one window and then another. She listened

excitedly to every sound of wheels on the pathway, and as the door opened and shut on any guest or any servant who entered where she was, she at first looked up expectantly and then a dull disappointed appearance would creep into her eyes showing that the one she hoped to see had still not yet arrived.

The morning slipped away and the afternoon, and in the evening she gave orders for the lamps to be lighted in the large newly-furnished drawing-room of the west wing. She herself sat in a little inner boudoir with two or three of her guests. At last the sound of wheels was heard stopping at the door beneath the tower. She sprang to the window, but outside it was too dark to distinguish anything. She rang and gave orders to be informed immediately who had arrived. But as the footman left the room Sidney Lembourn came forward.

He went straight to the marchioness saying, "Pardon my late arrival, my lady, and appearing before you in this dusty travelling costume, but I was detained at the station by——"

But she interrupted him, saying hastily as she gave him her hand,

"Have you heard anything of Edwin?"

"Not since he wrote from Copenhagen. He should meet me here the first of September."

"And now it is the last of August, he ought to be here," answered the lady with a slight frown on her brow.

"Lord and Lady Casterton have just arrived," announced a servant at the door.

The marchioness turned round hastily as the man continued,

"My lord begged to be shown to his rooms at once, and bade me say that tomorrow morning he will have the honour of seeing your ladyship."

The marchioness drew a deep sigh of relief, and her face brightened as, taking Sidney's hand and drawing him to a seat by her side, she said :

"Now I shall hear something about Lady Casterton ere we meet. I am glad of that."

"I regret exceedingly I can tell your Grace nothing," said Sidney quickly. "I know nothing of her except that she is young."

"Surely you know who she was ?" asked the marchioness hastily. "Not French, I hope ?"

"That could not possibly be after your expressed wish on that head," answered Sidney, smiling. "I know neither her name nor her rank, not even her appearance. All that I know is contained in this letter," and he handed a paper to the marchioness, who read half aloud,

"Two months have passed since we met

in Wiesbaden. I left that place as soon as I had found a bride to the marchioness's taste, my own had nothing to do with it as I only marry to please my lady aunt. I remembered she was not to be French, that she should be young, and of a character not to compromise my name I did not forget, both of which I obtained. And now no more of her. On the first of September I shall be at Harton Court, and there I shall see you again. Much I shall have to talk to you about my future plans, for the step I have been forced into making was not of my own seeking.

"In two days I shall be bound to a woman—in two days have my freedom over, the wings of my soul and of my dreams, and of life itself clipt, but whether for sorrow or joy the future will prove.

"I shall return to England, there to follow my destiny, and take up my career, enter the political world, and do my duty as my

forefathers did, squandering my money and intellect and strength in useless discussions, and for men's applause.

"The die is cast. My lady aunt pays the Casterton debts, and makes me a rich lord again, and in return for such service I put my head in the yoke, and marry,—such is woman's whim.

"Your friend,

"EDWIN CASTERTON."

The marchioness refolded the letter, slowly.

"May I keep it, Sir Sidney?"

"Certainly, on one condition—that you tell me for what reason?"

"I wish to remember the contents, for there are two or three remarks in it that some day I should like to show him, when he has learnt to laugh at his luck—and sees that he enjoys the fate—"

"You bestowed on him," laughingly in-

terrupted her companion; "keep the letter by all means!" he added, gravely. "Perhaps even you may find an expression or two in it worth thinking over."

"What do you mean?"

"That it is always hazardous to meddle in or try to mould another's fate. I told you so, my lady, if you remember, when you asked me to carry Edwin your message. You would not listen to me—but insisted on carrying out your own wish—and I am half afraid that you will have to answer for two people's misery as time goes on."

She was silent for several minutes ere she answered—

"Make yourself easy about that. I have acted, as I hope, sensibly; and if I have made a mistake, may the punishment fall on me!"

In the large dining-room at Harton Court the guests were assembling for lunch.

The marchioness was in her little boudoir chatting to Sidney.

Just as the clock struck two the door of the dining-room opened, and Lord Casterton, having on his arm a young lady, crossed the dining-hall, and entered the little private sanctuary. The marchioness and Sidney were standing at the window, discussing new plans for the arrangement of the garden, and did not hear the entrance of the newly-married pair till Edwin uttered a princely greeting, as he crossed the threshold of the room. At the sound of his voice both turned.

Sidney started as his eyes fell on Elvira, and she, as she saw his face, uttered a slight exclamation of surprise, as the blood mounted quickly and hotly to her cheeks.

She was so overcome for the moment at the unexpected meeting, that at first she did not hear the marchioness's words of

welcome, as she kissed her, and wished her happiness.

It was Edwin who recalled her to herself, by saying, coldly—

"It does not seem necessary to introduce Sir Sidney Lembourn to Lady Casterton. From the surprise you both now evince at this rencontre, you have evidently seen each other before."

Elvira looked quickly up at her husband. His lips smiled—but the smile was bitter and mocking, and made her shudder she knew not why.

"You are right," said Sidney, as he came forward and shook hands heartily with Casterton; "it's only a very short while ago I bade your wife farewell in Wiesbaden. It has surprised me to meet Miss Bromér again as Lady Casterton, but however unexpected it is, it need not prevent my wishing you joy. And you, my lady, I wish all the happiness you so richly deserve," and

he raised her hand to his lips and kissed it with a grace and devotion that brought a pleased smile to Edwin's eyes, as he followed the marchioness, with his wife on his arm, to the outer room, there to be presented to the assembled guests.

Elvira's appearance engaged them all. Her sweet childish face made it impossible not to feel interested in the woman herself, notwithstanding the position she held as Lady Casterton. She was so young, and her manner was so fresh and charming to every one who spoke to her, that whatever faults she might have had would have been forgotten—at least for the hour.

Towards her Edwin was polite and attentive, but cold and reserved—as she was also to him. When he spoke to her, which was very rarely, she dropped her eyes, and only answered what was absolutely necessary. There was not a shade of interest in his look as his eyes met hers—or a glimpse

of warmth in his manner, or any tenderness in tone or word when he addressed her. He was polite, nothing more, and as indifferent to her presence as he was laconic and short to his aunt.

Her first day at Harton Court passed very agreeably to Elvira. The marchioness was pleased with her, and showed it so decidedly, that all her relations and friends vied with each other in making the young stranger feel at ease and at home. And if flattery and devotion could make her happy then she had her desire. Besides, had she not a great name, a brilliant position, and high-born surroundings, who received her as one of themselves? what more could she wish?

And at night, when she was alone in her chamber, and the past day, with its new associations, rose up before her, she thought, as a smile passed her lips—

"It is, indeed, well to be a great lady,

and I shall be wondrously happy, only," and the smile died from off her lips as a wistful yearning expression swept over her face—"only I wish my husband were not so cold—but more like Sir Sidney Lembourn."

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE September sun shone warm and bright, as the next morning Elvira sprang from her bed, and drawing aside the curtains, gazed out of the window. True to her childhood's custom she dressed quickly, and went down into the park to enjoy the sweet fresh air in an early walk.

Passing on, as the whim of the moment carried her, she left the terrace and wandered through the pathways till she came to a little pavilion built after the Japanese style. The doors stood open, and she went in.

Before her was a winding staircase, which

she mounted, and found herself in a small octagonal room, from the windows of which could be seen all the grounds of the beautiful domain, and also the country stretching beyond.

She threw up a window and stood drinking in the balmy autumn air, and enjoying with her whole soul the beautiful landscape before her.

She had not been there very long when she heard voices. She leant forward to see who was speaking, but whoever they were, they were too close under the window for her to see them, for on that side the verandah intercepted her view. One of the voices she was sure was Sidney's. The first words she heard were: "A life without affection by the side of a man who does not care for the jewel he has won in his wife, and who will never give her more than cold indifference, is a hard future for a girl only just seventeen."

There was no answer, and the voices died away in the distance.

"Who were they?" thought Elvira, "and who were they speaking of?"

"Was it Lord Casterton Sidney spoke to, and was it of *her?*" She shrunk within herself at the thought, and shuddered as if with cold. "No, a thousand times no! It could not be! Never to be loved, and so young!"

And she hurried from the round chamber and descended the stairs, and looked in the two or three rooms below to find, if possible, the one who spoke. But she was alone, agitated and anxious, she forgot her intentions of a longer walk, and turned her steps towards the castle. As she entered the garden by the terrace she met her husband.

He came towards her, saying pleasantly—

"My dear Elvira, I was just going to look for you. My lady aunt is quite dis-

tressed that you should be out so early in the morning."

As Elvira took his offered arm she thought to herself—

"No, it was not with him that Sidney was talking. He wouldn't have had time to get here from the park, speak to the marchioness, and then come and find me."

She wished she could summon courage to ask him, but as she glanced in his face he looked so calmly indifferent, she was silent and made no answer.

At lunch she met Sidney. As he came up to her she said—

"I thought I heard your voice this morning near the Japanese pavilion. Did you go out early?"

"No, my lady," he answered, "I did not——"

"Why do you deny it?" she interrupted, without thinking. "I heard quite well what you said."

"Really?" and he looked at her.

"Shall I repeat the words?" she asked.

"If my words make such an impression on you, it will give me pleasure to hear them again."

"You said, 'A life without affection, by the side of a man who does not care for his wife, and who will never give her more than cold indifference, is a hard future for a woman only seventeen.' Now do you wonder I remember them, and that I want to know if it was you who uttered such sad words?"

Her eyes were fixed on his face. He drew his brows together, and pressed his lips tight as if he were in pain ere he answered.

"I can hardly imagine there is any meaning in the words you repeat; but I can assure you I have not been near the pavilion to-day."

Her eyes brightened and a sweet smile

was playing round her mouth as she answered, giving him her hand—

"You don't know how happy you make me, Sir Sidney;" and then as he bent his head in pleased acknowledgment, she continued—

"I should have been miserable if *you* had spoken that verdict for my future."

"God forbid I should ever be the cause of any pain to you," he replied, gravely and earnestly as the light shone in his eyes and the contraction of his lips relaxed, "I should never forgive myself—never!"

"Thank you for that, Sir Sidney; you are the best friend I know," she replied, smiling brightly as she turned from him, and took her place at the table.

She was relieved and glad, and felt as if she had escaped a danger which had been looming before her ever since she had been married.

She had now been Lord Casterton's wife for just a month.

The first days of her stay at Harton Court were without a shadow, but soon it was whispered that their young relative, Lady Casterton, was only a simple burgher's daughter. Then the proud relations and friends gathered in the old castle to do her honour, discovered that she had not the "ton" and the worldly knowledge they had a right to expect from one in her present position. They could not forgive her; her simple tastes and actions—telling, as they did, of her out-of-the-world experience—and the fresh girlish grace and soft, gentle manner were powerless against the fact of her ignoble birth and simple bringing up. It was of no use her trying to steal into their hearts, they were shut against her; and although the outward manner and words were as respectful and amiable as at first, yet the poor girl *felt*

the difference, and did not need to be told she was regarded as an intruder by this high-born set of visitors.

If Edwin had not been always out with the guns and dogs it might have been different. In the evening, when he was present in the drawing-room, the manner and looks of the guests to his wife were not so patronising as in the long mornings when he was away. "What could have made Lord Casterton marry a burgher's daughter, and a foreigner, too? He has strange tastes; but for the honour of the family he ought to have married a noble," was the remark made from one to the other, as soon as it was known he had wedded the daughter of a retired merchant; and as they did not dare resent the slight to their order in open words to himself, they visited their displeasure on the young bride in disdainful looks, and in polite but none the less stinging manner and words.

The marchioness was the only one who did not change towards her. She remained the same as on the first day of Elvira's arrival, but her manner was naturally cold and proud, and she was not a woman to whom a young inexperienced girl would turn for affection and kindly-meant advice. She exacted respect, and demanded the deference due to her rank and years from those about her, and although at heart she was kind and compassionate, she had no sympathy with the pettiness of a disposition that could torture and wound a gentle, innocent girl, merely because she was placed in a position for which her manner and bearing and beauty seemed to entitle her, but which her birth and family were beneath. But the marchioness said nothing, and did not appear even to notice the conduct of her guests.

She had done her duty to Edwin, and cleared his father's name from every shadow

of debt, restored the old estates to him free from all encumbrance, and put into his hands a sum of money sufficient to cover every expense for the coming year, and kept her promise in all things to give him a career worthy of his name and house. She had received his wife with a warm welcome, and expressed herself pleased with the choice he had made, but it was not in her nature to interfere in the daily struggle going on under her roof between the happiness of her newly-acquired relative, and the manner in which this happiness was fast ebbing away.

A short month ago Elvira was a bright happy child, enjoying with girlish delight the high name she bore, and rejoicing in the position she had attained. Now she was rapidly changing into a silent, shy, proud woman.

She dreaded to give vent to any feeling, or follow the dictates of her own simple

tastes, for fear of hearing, "Dear me, *Lady Casterton* should not act so," in a polite but astonished tone from one of the ladies around her, and too proud to resent what she vaguely felt was a slight and insult to her husband, she preferred, one by one, giving up her old habits, and checking the words as they rose to her lips, when her feelings were moved and her heart was full. But there was *one* near her with whom she was always herself, and that one was Sidney.

To her he was a kind, prudent brother, helping her in trouble, smoothing away the stinging words as they fell on her ear, and exhorting her to be patient, and try and win her own way, instead of complaining to the marchioness, as she in her anger would often have done. He taught her to watch herself when in society, and to show indifference instead of wounded pride to the slights imposed upon her.

He knew the world Elvira would hence-

forth have to mix in, and how unfortunate it would be if she made for herself enemies. He told her that the best cure for all censure was to treat it with contempt when she did not deserve it, and he instilled into her warm, frank nature the necessity for ruling her feelings, and trying to adopt in her manner the cold English pride which concealed the emotions, and to treat with nonchalant indifference every word and look that were derogatory to her present exalted rank and position. The lesson was difficult for such a young creature to learn, but Sidney saw the necessity of it, and bade her have courage to accomplish it. She succeeded as well as was to be expected in so short a time. Even in the few weeks which had elapsed since her entrance at Harton Court, she was fast learning to present to the world a cold, proud manner, which was the contrary to her natural character, and warm, impulsive disposition.

In all things she was changed, but she clung to her friend and brother, and for her he was a true and faithful friend. The name of her husband was never mentioned between them. It was now the end of September, and the first of October was fixed for their leaving Harton Court. All the guests had left but Sidney, and he seemed unwilling to go.

Edwin had been the whole morning engaged with the marchioness in business, signing and looking over papers. Elvira was alone the whole day. About six the door of her room opened, and the marchioness came in, saying, in a kind, pleasant tone—

"We have finished business at last, dear child, and I have come to have a little chat with you before dinner. What!" she exclaimed, as she came close to Elvira and put her hand on her shoulder, "tears! What is it troubles you?"

The colour rushed into Elvira's cheeks, but she did not answer.

"So you won't tell me your trouble? And perhaps you are right—I can hardly expect a child's confidence; but let me give you one bit of advice—never let your husband see your tears, my dear. Men like Edwin hate tears. In two days you and he leave here, and then you will have to start before the world as a noble lord's wife. Do it, dear child, with dignity. Casterton will demand and expect from his wife self-forgetfulness and a noble manner."

"Ah!" sobbed Elvira, with a heavy weight in her bosom, "it seems to me that *he* expects and demands all, and gives nothing."

"He has given you his name, and with it his honour and reputation. Don't you understand that such a gift requires many sacrifices from the woman who ac-

cepts it?" answered the elder lady, thoughtfully.

"But, aunt, in your land does the husband never love his wife?" and the tears rolled down over her cheeks.

"If he does, then the wife is grateful; but if he *does not*, then she must act as if she did not know his want of affection for her. A proud woman never allows herself to complain over disappointed hopes. If she is happy enough to win love, then she ought in her heart to be thankful to God. If not, tears and sorrow won't bring it, or warm any husband's heart towards his wife. If one day you find out that your husband does not love you, accept your fate, and guard his family honour. Never forget, child, that he has given you his name. Be amiable, but never tender or passionate to him; make his home pleasant for him; do him honour in the world, but never sicken him with a show of affection, for where a

man does not love his wife, such feelings only drive him farther from her. Try only to surround him with all that he most enjoys, and you will make your home a temple of peace, and in time be comforted for the loss of the deeper and warmer feelings you failed to inspire in his heart and soul. What I say is truth, dear child," and the marchioness looked at her young relative with an anxious and tender expression in her face that not many had often seen there.

Elvira buried her face in her hands; she understood with her mind, but her heart refused to accept the full meaning of such bitter words.

"Why does she say it all to me?" she asked herself, uneasily; then in a moment or two she whispered—

"Is it to prepare me for my future fate that you speak so, my lady?"

"Whatever fate awaits you neither you

nor I can tell," answered her hostess, as her voice slightly shook in sorrow at the young miserable face before her. "Marriage is a hazardous game, from which few draw a lucky number. I have seen many young couples start with much love on both sides, and in a few years the one wish of each has been to be away from the other; any life rather than be together. And now, dear child, dry up your tears, show your husband a smiling face, and never let the world see you have a care or a heavy thought. Be proud, and bear your sorrows, if you ever have any, alone. No third person has any right to meddle between husband and wife. But I won't preach any more. I have only said so much because I wish you well and take an interest in you. Come, it's just seven, and the dinner-bell will ring directly," and with a kiss she left the young bride alone.

Poor child! she felt very sad. She

dreaded departing with Edwin with no one near her, not even her friend Sidney, to tell her what was right to do. To pass all her life with the husband who did not seem to care if she were happy or miserable, seemed more than she could bear, he so rarely spoke to her, so rarely smiled, and so constantly left her alone. If he loved her he never showed it, and yet she asked herself what else did he marry her for?

She bathed her face, summoned her maid, and went down to dinner in about half an hour with a pale but smiling face. As the meal progressed the conversation fell on the old college days. The subject interested Edwin, and he talked brightly and well. From the happy years at Oxford he and Sidney passed on to the time of the first journey abroad.

"Ah! that was a glorious time, when I was free to do as I liked," he exclaimed, as

his eyes flashed and warmed with the remembrance. "I would give half my life to live over again those years, but they have all gone, and will never return."

"Why not?" asked Elvira.

He turned and looked at her, the light dying out of his face, and his mouth resuming its usual sarcastic expression.

"Why not? Because when I married I said farewell to all wandering joyous life, and from a poor man became a rich one, with duties fretting me which naturally arise from the bit of sod called landed property, and in these two possessions I lost my freedom."

"And you regret?" she asked, as her cheeks burned with the painful colour.

"I certainly regret the pleasure I had," he answered, quietly.

Elvira's eyes flashed. She opened her mouth to speak, but ere the words were uttered Sidney said—

"Apropos to pleasures—do you know I have lost my Isabella?"

"No; how was that?" asked Edwin, quickly, and before the history of the favourite mare was finished, Elvira had had time to recover her usual outward calm and the colour to fade from her hot cheeks.

"This morning," said the marchioness, turning to her young guest as Sidney ended, "I heard from a friend of mine, the Duchess of ——, that her maid is leaving. I know she is a first-rate clever lady's-maid, and I would like to recommend her to you, my dear. The Swede you have now is not strong enough for all you will require. You should let her rest now. She was your nurse as a baby, was she not?"

"Yes, and—and that is why it would pain me to part with her."

"Of course, that is quite natural, and there is no need to do it; but take a

younger maid, and let the old one enjoy herself as she likes in your house. Every Casterton has taken care of old trusty servants after they are unfit for work," and so saying, she rose from the table, and followed by Elvira, went into the drawing-room. They had not been there long, when Elvira noticed that the marchioness had fallen asleep in her arm-chair, and the thought rushed through her mind to listen unobserved to the conversation between her husband and his friend. Perhaps they would speak of her, and if so, she would know if the words of the marchioness had any real meaning in them beyond trying to soothe her in her dejected sadness. It was the last time the friends would have a chance of an uninterrupted talk, and she thought it was likely they would continue the subject begun during dinner, and cut short by her own unlucky question.

She slipped out of the drawing-room, and

quietly entered a small boudoir, divided by curtains from the dining-room. Where she sat it was quite dark, but the light of the large apartment fell full and clear on the young men sipping their wine at the dining-table.

"Your way of condemning the marchioness is not right," Sidney was saying, as she took her seat on a low ottoman behind the curtain, "and you shouldn't say her only motive for making you marry was her dislike to your cousin, the pretty Countess Mourville. Her love for your father was true and sincere, and her real motive for doing as she has done was worthy of her, for it was *your* happiness in the future."

"I should be ungrateful and unthankful to her; any way, whatever her motive, I think she has made a great mistake," answered Edwin. "Happiness and I have parted company for ever."

"How can you talk such nonsense?" exclaimed Sidney; "it is a shame when you have such a beautiful, rich, and really loving girl for your wife. How can you be unhappy with *such* a woman as Lady Casterton? You must learn to love her sooner or later."

"Shall I?" he answered, in a sneering tone, "but I never shall. My earnest desire at the present moment is to cut the knot which ties us together. I grant you she is beautiful, for so her face struck me when first I saw it; that she is loving, I cannot say; but that she was richly dowered makes me angry every time I think of it. To me she is merely the link which unites me to fortune and power. Love her I cannot; but you must know me enough to be sure that although my pride doomed me to live alone by the side of my wife, yet I shall always treat her with the honour and respect which is her

due. When that grows beyond endurance, then——"

"Ah, Casterton, how bitterly you make me repent ever having said a word to lead you to this," interrupted Sidney, hurriedly. "It pains me to know that I helped her to such a fate unwittingly to live by the side of a husband *she* loves, but who returns it as you do. Ah! it must be bitter indeed!"

"Don't distress yourself, my dear fellow, for she cares for me as little as I do for her."

"A rich, beautiful girl, a child in years as she is, would only marry for love."

"It was not so here, any way, my dear fellow. My wife told me she only married to be a great lady. Had I been old and a villain it would not have mattered, so long as I was a peer of the realm. Our compact was about equal: she, the daughter of an unknown shopman, took me to become a

lady of title, and I took her to get back the wealth and power of my forefathers. I ask you if it is possible that a girl who would so act, will break her heart because she is not loved? If I were one of those fellows who could bear things quietly and had no temper, our future life might be bearable, but as I am not, well——"

"But you won't, in such a case, separate?"

"That sounds, mon cher, as if you did not know my character. Through me there will never be a separation—oh, no! my lady aunt obliged me to marry, and I hope I have honour enough in me, and pride too, to let the world imagine that the marriage is a happy one. No one need know it is just the contrary; and although my wife is a novice as yet in worldly wisdom, she will play her rôle as well as I shall, I hope, for it is all I shall ask or demand of her."

"But what if just *that* is too difficult

for her?" persisted Sidney. "If she basked in your affection, any rôle would be easy; but if she forgets, and longs for the love she is denied by your side? The tenderness you deny her yourself others may be willing to lavish on such a lovely young creature."

"You forget that she married only for greatness, so *cannot* possess any heart. She has her wish, and when she has learnt to put aside her present simple undignified manner, and adopt the patrician bearing which naturally peeps out occasionally, she will feel her power. She will forget any nonsense of love and affection, and enjoy the position she has sacrificed her heart to obtain."

"You judge her as harshly as an hour ago you did the marchioness. Lady Casterton has more heart than most women," said Sidney quietly.

"You persist in it that she married me

for love? Then it must have been a very sudden thing, growing in a few hours to perfection—for I only saw her three times when I received her 'Yes,'" said Edwin, with a sarcastic smile curling his mouth.

"She must have seen you before and fallen in love with you—for if she only married for rank, why did she refuse me?" answered Sidney in a firm tone.

"Did you propose to her?" exclaimed Edwin, opening his eyes.

"Yes I did, but she refused me."

A silence fell between them. At last Edwin asked,

"Why did you ask her?"

"Because I loved her. And now, Casterton, let me assure you that it must have been something else besides pride and vainglory that made her marry you. *I* am positive that she loves you, and that she is miserable because you do not give her one kind or warm word."

"Then you mistake, Lembourn. She is only playing a rôle. But, allowing it is as you say—what then? I shall never—love her."

"Edwin, take care what you say—it's not possible. Sooner or later she must win your heart and——"

"Not likely—*never* can I love her, but with all my soul I regret that the woman you love has become my wife, and that I have taken from you your happiness. But come, let us join the ladies and tea;" and, pushing back his chair, he rose to leave the room, when a servant entered and begged him to enter the library a moment, as the marchioness desired to speak to him.

As Edwin passed from the room, he almost touched Elvira's dress. She made no sign of her presence, but, silent and swift as a shadow, passed out of the door, and up to her own room.

The next morning Edwin was at his toilette, when a note was handed to him from "my lady."

Somewhat surprised that his wife should write to him when she knew that he usually paid her a visit for half an hour before lunch, he tore open the envelope to read its contents.

"My Lord," she wrote, "I beg you to have the kindness to come and see me as soon as you are dressed. I wish to speak with you before seeing the Marchioness.

"ELVIRA."

Edwin's brow darkened as he thought, "What can she have to say? Some trifle which she thinks important, I suppose," But at the same time he hastened to finish his toilette, and a quarter of an hour after he opened the door of his wife's boudoir.

She was busy arranging her jewels, putting them into their cases; but as soon as she

saw him, she rose from her seat and, approaching him, said—

"You look surprised at my request, my lord. But it is necessary that we have an understanding, now we are about to leave your aunt's house."

"I am delighted to talk with you on any subject," said Edwin, kindly, as he took a seat opposite her, adding, with a smile—"An invitation from a charming young wife is always pleasant to receive."

"I beg you will cease such flattery," broke in, abruptly, Elvira. "For what I have to say is exactly the contrary. I am going to speak the truth, and only the truth."

"A very courageous undertaking," he murmured.

"I know that," she answered, as her mouth trembled. "But it is about our leaving here I wish to speak. *You* are going to Casterton, I believe?"

"Well I thought *we* were going there, for a time at least."

"*We*, my lord! You still intend, then, to regard our union as a true marriage?"

"I can hardly regard it as anything else than it is," he answered, as he looked at her with increased astonishment.

"Then you deceive yourself, my lord. It is *not* what it appears to be. We are not married, as the world imagines. We are not one, but simply two people bound by one vow—you to fulfil your aunt's wish, I to obtain a noble name. We have nothing but this name in common, and it would be a cruel compulsion to make us live side by side. My wish is to go back to Sweden and see my father, who is very ill, and you can go to Casterton, or where you will, till the end of next August, when we can again meet and play our passionless rôle for a month, according to your aunt's wish, at Harton Court."

"Is that your *real* wish?" he asked.

"I should not say so if it were not."

"And the reason?"

"My lord, I should have thought you would understand that. I have obtained a name, you a wife—or, rather, the means of obtaining a fortune. As you have passed this month so I suppose you mean to go on, and if so, we have nothing to lose by separation. I will jealously guard the honour of the name you have given me," and her voice shook with an emotion she could ill conceal; "and—and—you shall have *Lady Casterton* with you the moment the time arrives to visit your aunt. But till then it would be cruelty to us both to oblige me to live by your side so utterly alone—never to see you in the twenty-four hours but when we meet at dinner, and go through the empty farce of affectionate man and wife. No, no! let us separate for the year. You can be free as air to go

where you will—and I—I will go back to my own dear country, and stay with my father, or wherever he may be."

Edwin was silent. The frowning brow and compressed lips showed how bitterly his wife's words had wounded his pride. It was some minutes ere he trusted himself to speak, for fear the words he uttered should be repented of the moment they passed his lips. And she, watching him as he nervously walked to and fro in the little room, saw his face had an expression of pain on it, and something like content crept into her heart. As the clock ticked on, and he did not answer, she said, anxiously—

"I await your answer, my lord."

"I can but do as you wish, and agree to what you say," he answered at last, in a cold, constrained tone, as he ceased his restless walk and sat down.

Elvira hid her face in her hands as she

turned pale and trembled. She had hoped that, after all, he would not consent.

"God knows," she muttered secretly, in her bitterness, "I would not have asked it if I had known he would consent so easily." But gathering her pride to her aid, she said aloud as her eyes flashed, and the colour returned to her cheek—"Then there is only one more thing to add, my lord. I return you these jewels," and she pointed to the cases lying on the table at her elbow. "They have adorned me when I appeared as your wife before the friends here, but I will not accept them as mine. I will have no presents from you—you care nothing for me. Neither will I keep this, it only belongs to *Lady* Casterton—see how I value it!"—and she took from a case the deed which he had given her as his marriage dowry, and, tearing it in two, she flung it at his feet. "Your politeness, my lord," she went on, more

calmly, as she threw herself back in her fauteuil, "is the only thing I can or will remember of you—for it I am grateful. One more word and I have finished: at lunch *I* will tell the marchioness that my father's illness recalls me to Sweden. *She* shall never, with my will, know the true reason for my journey, or what a cold, empty marriage ours is. And I promise you, my lord, that as much as I can I will retire from the world, and you may always depend upon me to join you the moment any shadow falling on you, may require me. I will detain you no longer."

"And I, my lady, have no desire to intrude upon you further," he answered, as he rose up and stood before her, with a face as agitated and pale as her own. "I congratulate you that you *can* act as you have done. It shows great decision and heartlessness of character. The possessor of such traits requires no support or stay

by her side, not even to warn her against indulging in a passing tenderness for any other man. You have sacrificed a woman's heart for a high-sounding title. It is not likely that in the future you will sacrifice the title for any womanly weakness. You are far too proud and cold to betray the confidence I place in you. My honour is safe, although we henceforth live in different countries."

And he turned away, without looking at her, to leave the room. But ere he reached the door, it was suddenly thrown open, and Lotta rushed in, exclaiming—

"See, here is a black-edged letter from Sweden! For heaven's sake, open it and read!"

Elvira's hand trembled, and she shook all over as she opened the letter. At the first glance of its contents, she uttered a low wail, and tottered to the sofa.

"Oh God! my father is dead!" she

moaned, as her head sunk back on the pillows.

"She has a heart, then, and can love," thought Edwin, as he bent over her. But before he could say one word, just as his warm breath fanned her cheek, she sprang up, pushed his hands away from her, and rushed into her own room, locking the door within.

## CHAPTER IX.

N a bright, beautiful, spring morning, one of the tiny steamers, which flit up and down, and dart in and out of, the bay surrounding Stockholm, passed a huge vessel coming from the south, a few miles beyond the town.

The captain hailed her as she lightly skimmed along, and in answer, she wheeled gracefully round, and in a few seconds was by the side of the huge steamer.

A word or two to her captain, and she again altered her course, and bright and quick as a fire-fly she sped inland and stopped at a landing place buried in over-

hanging trees; behind which arose a magnificent country seat.

One of the passengers on board the vessel who had been watching with great interest the graceful movements of the liliputian boat, suddenly inquired of a lady near him:

"What is that beautiful building, behind where the little boat is lying? It projects proudly from the mountain side."

"That's Timasjö," answered the lady whom he addressed.

"Does it belong to Count Stangenskjöld?"

"It did once," she answered with a smile, that proved her interest in the subject, adding, "The count sold it after his father-in-law's death abroad, and I don't wonder he wanted to get rid of it, for nearly all his children died there. Timasjö has been a sad home for the count's family."

"Who owns it now?" asked the gentleman.

"Lady or Countess Casterton. She inherited it from her father, Herr Bromér, who bought it a short time before he died, and paid 500,000 rixdalers for it. There is a little bit of a place called Skeggäro—which belonged to the château—lying on the other side close by, which the count would not sell; though why he has kept it it's difficult to say, for the house is damp and dismal, and is neither large nor fit to live in."

"What do you say the lady is called?" continued the questioner, who was a military-looking, middle-aged man.

"Casterton. She married two years ago an English count, or lord as he is called in England. I know her quite well, for she was educated in my house, at Altorp, which lies quite near. When her father first brought her to me she could scarcely read, and when she left me three years ago, she was the best educated and sweetest girl I

ever saw. The marriage has been a strange one. The girl loved a young man who had no rank; but her father made her marry the lord. Then six weeks after, she found out he was mad, and so came back to Sweden; where she heard as she landed of her father's death. For six months she lived quietly, in the deepest grief, seeing no one. But in the autumn she left here, and went to see her mad husband, they say. She has been away a whole year, but now, I hear, she is back again. She is at Timasjö, I suppose, but I am not sure, as I have been for several weeks staying in Skania."

Mrs. Brogren, for it was she who spoke, now stopped to take breath; but her companion, who seemed a most curious individual, asked:

"Had Mr. Bromér any other children besides this Lady Casterton?"

"No, certainly not. He was never married, but he acknowledged this child,

though why he did not marry the mother I can't imagine; she was a steady, kind, industrious woman, and—"

"Did you know her mother then?" interrupted the gentleman with a start.

"As well as I know myself! She was in my house for years. Herr Bromér paid for her as he did for the child; he said she was the little one's nurse; but of course I knew she was her mother. I did all I could to make him marry her; but it was of no use. The only grievance I have against the sweet countess now, is that she still lets Lotta keep her place of lady's-maid, which is not right, as she must know she is her mother. Lotta is still young, only about forty; but the countess ought to give her a little house to herself, and not let her be servant in her daughter's château."

"Then this Lotta still lives with the countess, as you call her?"

"Of course! And she has never been

separated from her, till the last time the Countess Casterton went away, when she only took with her her English maid, leaving Lotta behind to keep Timasjö in order, and look after the poor on the estate during her absence."

"As you had Lady Casterton so many years in your care, of course you thoroughly understood her character and disposition. What is she like? tell me, for I am getting interested in your young countess," said the stranger as he lit his pipe and leaned over the side of the vessel.

"Ah, sir! she is an angel, and a sweeter child you could not imagine; she had a temper, for all children have, but her heart is soft and tender, and it would be impossible to know or find in the world a more generous, kind girl. My own children I could not love better than I did our dear little Elvira."

And the dean's widow put her hand-

kerchief to her eyes and wiped away a tear.

The stranger left her with a bow, and going up to the captain at the other side, said something to him which she did not hear; but the captain answered in a loud voice,

"Very well, I'll try; if we meet one of the fishing-boats presently, perhaps we can manage it."

A quarter of an hour after, the captain hailed one of the boats plying about, slackened the speed of his steamer, and in a few moments the curious passenger jumped over the side of the vessel into the little boat lying alongside, and was rowed away in the direction of Timasjö.

The steamer with the dean's widow on board, continued her route towards the town of Stockholm.

## CHAPTER X.

TIMASJÖ had been so altered and added to that it was almost impossible to recognize it as the building of four years ago.

As soon as the papers were signed which passed it into the hands of Herr Bromér, he sent for an architect and bade him prepare plans for rebuilding it almost entirely, but he died ere the alterations were completed. Elvira carried out the wish of her father, and gave orders to have everything finished exactly as he had planned it.

It was finished at last, and was certainly one of the handsomest seats in the country.

No expense had been spared to beautify it, and its pillars of marble, its staircase, balconies, galleries, ornaments, and gilding were each and all as perfect as art could render them.

The old knightly hall had been converted into a magnificent dining-room, with the Casterton arms emblazoned over the sideboard, and their shield and motto shining in the window.

The portrait gallery was a long sweeping room, but as yet only two paintings hung there. One, Edwin Casterton, as a young boy; the other, Lydia, Marchioness Brissier.

At the end of this gallery was a moderate-sized, well-lighted room, beautifully furnished with every luxury a woman's taste and an upholsterer's skill could devise. The walls were hung with costly pictures, painted by the first masters; quaint little statuettes filled the corners;

and on one side stood a handsome book-case filled with richly-bound volumes. Sofas, lounging-chairs, and fauteuils stood invitingly all over the room; a work-table near the window, with a basket of freshly-gathered flowers by the side of an open book, showed that it was in constant use.

Upon the wall, opposite this table, was a painting conspicuous for its simple frame and faded appearance. It was the portrait of Herr Bromér, and before it stood Elvira, with a thoughtful, sad expression covering her whole face.

The three years which have elapsed since we last saw her have changed the simple girlish bride of seventeen into a strikingly beautiful woman. Her features are the same, but her figure and whole bearing are developed into perfection of form and great dignity and grace of movement. As she stands gazing at the portrait with her head slightly bent and her hands folded, it would be

difficult to imagine a more winsome face or a fairer picture of womanhood. A servant entered and interrupted her reverie, and with a sigh she turned away from the portrait and sat down.

"There is a lady wishes to see your ladyship."

"What is her name?"

'She refuses to give it, but told me to tell your ladyship that she is a friend of your childhood."

"A childhood's friend!" exclaimed Elvira. "Show her in here."

"Who can it be?" she thought; "one of my school-fellows, perhaps. Many of them have already been to see me. The old-clothesman's daughter is *somebody* now worth knowing; though the one who made my school life miserable, and goaded me on with her bitter words till I sacrificed everything for a great name, has never, never been near me. How I wish I could

undo the sacrifice which made me Lady Casterton, and be once again free!"

The curtains were drawn aside as a servant's voice said—

"Walk this way, my lady is here."

Elvira's eyes turned to the door and rested on—Armida!

The sadness disappeared from her face, and in its stead a flush of joy lit up her features, and as she rose to receive her guest, the thought passed through her mind—

"At last we meet!"

As soon as Armida had stepped over the threshold of the luxurious morning-room and the curtains were closed behind her, the two school companions looked at each other for several seconds. Armida was pale, and her whole appearance betokened poverty and sorrow, for the years since she had seen the beautiful woman before her were years of grief and distress to her. Elvira threw back her small well-shaped

head, as for a moment she revelled in the knowledge that she now possessed in the highest degree the rank and position her former school-fellow had said would never be hers.

But only for a moment did her pride have its way, and a second after she advanced to Armida, saying gently and kindly as she put out her hand—

"To what fate am I indebted for this visit? If there is anything I can help you in I will do it with pleasure."

Armida took her hand and kissed it several times, as she answered in a pathetic tone—

"I see, I was right when I determined to come to you, my childhood's companion. I was sure that your good tender heart was not changed. Dear, much-loved Elvira, for I call you so still, you were ever dear to me, although unfortunately I did not always show my affection for you."

Elvira drew away her hand, answering coldly—

"Armida, we were never friends, and you never had any affection for me; why do you pretend to have now what never existed? Do you fancy I shall be flattered, or that your words will heal the wounds you inflicted years ago? No, no, they are painful and bitter to me still when I think of them. Put aside all assumed friendship; simply say to me what you want, and I will give it you if it is in my power, but don't try and flatter me. Tell me, what can I do for you?"

Armida looked up at the noble, generous face before her, and burst into tears.

"Are you in trouble?" asked Elvira, kindly, as she laid her hand on Armida's shoulder. "Whatever it is tell me at once, and I will gladly serve you if I can."

"I am poor," was the sobbing answer. "I have no friends and no protectors,

and I have no home," and the sadness of her voice told that she spoke the miserable truth.

"That is easily remedied," said Elvira, kindly, after a moment's thought; "stay with me during the summer, and by that time we shall have had time to think of the future."

"Elvira!" exclaimed Armida, hardly able to believe her ears as she stared at the calm, sympathizing face by her side. But the eyes she had so often wrung bitter tears from returned her gaze with a full, warm forgiveness, and for *once* in her life as she met that gaze her own eyes drooped with shame, and Armida stammered her thanks with truth and gratitude. An hour after Elvira rang the bell and ordered the guest-chamber with the blue hangings to be prepared for Fröken Kayhjelm, then smiling at her visitor, she said—

"Now go and rest till dinner-time; in

the evening we will take a walk in the park, and you shall see some of the changes. Good-bye till then."

As soon as Armida was in her room she banished at once the emotion which Elvira's unexpected kindness had caused, and began to draw comparisons between her present homeless condition, and the luxury around her hostess.

It angered her to think that *she*, Fröken Kayhjelm, was driven to seek help from her bitterest enemy, and as she thought it over all her gratitude faded, and she only remembered her own forlorn condition, and began to believe that the noble, forgiving invitation she had received was given out of revenge, to show how completely the old-clothesman's daughter had her in her power. Yes, even sending her up to rest was only an excuse to send her away.

That Elvira did so to avoid wounding her with questions and to free her from

uttering expressions of gratitude never seemed to enter into Armida's mind. She accepted the generous gift of a home for the summer months with the same hardness of feeling she had years before in their school-life, treated all the kindly advances of her class-mate. She would not believe in Elvira's real goodness and forgetfulness of self, and anything would be easier to forgive than this last act of friendship which she was forced into accepting by her wretched forlorn state, but she comforted herself with the thought that she would yet have it in her power to make Elvira suffer; and after all, would it not be fair to make her feel pain in some form in return for the utter humiliation she had imposed on her guest? And having arrived at this point in her reflections, she rose from her resting-place and arranged her dress, and brushed her hair, and tried to make herself look well, hoping that the

worn appearance of her only black silk would pass unnoticed by the servants, though she knew Elvira would see it the moment she entered the drawing-room.

A week slipped by, at the end of which Elvira had succeeded in supplying Armida with every article she needed for her toilette, and that, too, in such a delicate way that it was impossible for her to take offence or for her pride to be wounded.

One beautiful afternoon Elvira and her guest were sitting in the park, when Armida related how it was she came to have no home.

"You know, dear Elvira, when you left school, just four years ago, I was staying with Martha as her companion. My guardian died soon after, and when his affairs were looked into it was discovered my small fortune was gone, and that there only remained a tiny legacy between me and poverty. Naturally I thought this being

the case I should remain on with Martha as her companion. Countess Stangenskjöld was ill, and I nursed her like a daughter, and did everything I could for her till she died. A few months after Martha broke off her engagement with Carl Brogren, and then she dismissed me suddenly.

"I tried everywhere to get another situation as companion, but I failed entirely, and the money I had gradually grew less and less, till I was obliged to sell my jewels to keep me from starving. My friends wouldn't help me, and the only relations I have didn't answer my letters. I heard you were married to an English lord, and that, rich and with high rank, you had come to live here. At last, when all my money was gone, and starvation was before me, I put aside my pride and determined to buy with the only few rix-dalers left to me, a passage in the steamer to come here, and to appeal to your kind

heart, dear Elvira, for help, and it was not in vain I did so."

"But," said Elvira, "why did Martha turn against you in such a strange manner and not find you another home? There must have been a cause."

"Certainly," she answered, "there were many. The few months I stayed with her after her mother's death, she and I quarrelled constantly about her mother and Carl. She was not a kind or affectionate daughter, and after some time she began to be cold to Carl, and when they heard you were married she insisted upon it that he changed towards her, and finally broke off the engagement. We were in Baden Baden then, and as soon as she was free of Carl she told me she did not require me any longer. She didn't care for my having no home, all she wanted was to send me away, as I reminded her of her stupidity in accepting Carl Brogren. He left the place,

and the Baroness B. asked me to stay with her on higher terms than Martha had given me. But no sooner had we come back to Sweden than she began to pay me less, so I left her. I came to Stockholm to get another home, but the count told every one we knew not to have me."

"Why did he do such an ungenerous thing?" asked Elvira.

"Because Martha didn't want me to mix in her society, for fear I should say why we separated. And you know the count is as wax in her hands, and does just what she tells him. I know Martha trembled for fear I would tell here and there, things that would not have been much to the honour of such a proud family."

"But you shouldn't say such things," answered Elvira. "It is not right to say of an enemy what you would not say of a friend. It would be wrong of you."

"I know that, so I was silent. But it made me angry to see the way Carl was treated. It will be her fault if he goes wrong; she professed so much affection for him, and was so fearfully jealous. Poor Carl!" And she sighed as she looked at her companion, hoping to be asked why she was jealous.

"Till the middle of August I remain here," said Elvira, "then I go to England to meet my husband, and it is very likely I shall remain abroad the whole winter. As long as I am here, of course you will stay with me, but when I travel I should like to know you have a pleasant home and that you are not worried about money." After a moment's thought she added, "What do you say to starting a school? I will willingly help you, and advance you money sufficient to go on for a year without trouble."

"How good you are," murmured Armida. "What can I say to thank you?"

"Nothing at all. I will write at once to my agent and put it in train," she answered smiling. "Come, let us take a turn round the grove yonder."

"Shall you meet your husband this summer?" suddenly asked Armida.

"Yes, in London, at the end of August, and together we go to the Marchioness Brissier's for a visit," she answered.

"Is there another Lord Casterton?"

"No, my husband is the last scion of his house."

"How very strange!" remarked Armida more to herself than her companion.

Elvira opened her lips to speak, but thought better of her question and remained silent.

As they drew near an opening in the trees where they had a view of the sea with its numerous little islands dotted

here and there as far as the eye could reach, she broke the silence by saying,

"Sweden is indeed a lovely country, and to me dearer than any other. I hope always to have my home here."

"It must be dear to you," answered Armida, "as you seem to prefer it, even when it separates you from your husband."

"You must acknowledge," continued Elvira, taking no notice of the remark, "that Timasjö is wonderfully improved. Would any one believe that the beautiful building standing there was the same as the dismal gray castle of four years ago? Do you know I cannot bear old castles, they always make me think of ruin and decay, and of pain and sorrow, and struggles and sacrifices. No, no; I like new things best, that have no histories to make you shudder over, and no legends telling of broken hearts. Perhaps it is because I come of a class possessing no ancestry, but

who live and die in the life of the hour. Shopmen, merchants, and old-clothesmen are all children of the night, you know, springing up wherever there is nurture to feed them. You have not forgotten your old dislike to them, have you?" And she laughed merrily as she looked in her companion's shocked face.

"Elvira!" cried Armida, as the purple colour mounted to her forehead.

"Don't blush over it," said Elvira lightly, "for if you openly expressed contempt for my father's trade, it was my fault to care about it. If I had been born a noble, I too should have been proud of my forefathers' name and arms and good blood, but as I am the daughter of a rich—nobody, I love to surround myself with all the luxury money can procure—I suppose we each have a pet power, mine is money, and I am glad I could make Timasjö as beautiful as it is, and as modern as the

age I live in. But see, there is Johan. What can he want with us now ?"

"Perhaps some visitors," answered Armida.

"There is a gentleman, my lady," said the man as he neared his mistress, "who understands no Swedish, waiting in the drawing-room. He gave me this card."

"What a delightful pleasure!" exclaimed Elvira, as she glanced at the card the servant handed her. And without a word more she hastened towards the house, leaving Armida in some curiosity as to whom it could be, who thus delighted her with an unexpected visit.

## CHAPTER XI.

BEFORE the full-length portrait of Lord Casterton in the large drawing-room, stood a young, tall, and well-built man. Behind him the door opened and Elvira, beaming with smiles, came towards him exclaiming,

"Welcome, Sir Sidney, welcome! How I have longed to see you again, and how delighted I am to welcome you in my own home. Why it seems a perfect age since we last met."

She gave him both her hands, and he holding them in both his, answered,

"How shall I thank you for your kindly

greeting which makes me so happy! I am inclined to forget for a moment it comes from Lady Casterton. Thank you, dear friend, for the confidence your words imply." And he kissed her hand ere he let it go.

As he spoke the smile died out of her face, and her habitual coldness returned. She remembered the gulf between her and Sir Sidney, and it made the colour forsake her face, and a strange longing creep over her to burst into tears.

"Ah, Sir Sidney," she said sadly, "I have so often wanted a friend, that when he came I could not conceal my joy. Your advice and kindness I have daily missed, and I am afraid I have strayed into paths you will not approve of."

"That's just why I have come, my lady. I am here to ask you what you have done with Casterton's happiness, and for that matter with your own too?"

She did not answer in words, but a heavy tear rolled off her cheek.

"Forgive me if my words pain you," continued Sidney, "but how am I to avoid it if I tell you the truth and am a true friend to you and your husband?"

"Scold me and prove me in the wrong as you will," she answered, "but let me see behind your frown a glimpse of pity and forgiveness. I have so few friends, no one seems to love me but my old nurse."

"Whose fault is that?" asked Sidney, keeping back with all his force and will the desire to sympathize with and love her as he knew he did stronger than ever.

"Not mine," she replied as she raised her head. "No one seems to care if I have a heart—or if I have if it is worth cultivating—but why speak of this now? Why in the first few moments of your arrival ask such bitter questions?"

"You are right, my dear lady—this is not

the time to discuss such points, for in a little while the Secretary of the English Legation will be here with his wife. I met them on the journey, and they told me they were coming by your invitation."

"Yes, I know. I have been expecting them the last week; but before they come ——tell me if——if——you met——"

"Your husband? Well! I have seen him, and that's all, for I have been travelling the last two years."

"Where did you meet him?"

"In London. But when did you see him last, my lady?"

"Last year, in September," she whispered as she covered her face with her hands and burst into tears. "Oh! I am very, very miserable," she cried as her sobs shook her from head to foot.

Had he been a Cato it would have been impossible to see the woman he loved with his whole soul weeping before him and not

try and comfort her. Poor Sidney! it was a hard struggle, but he conquered—and instead of taking her in his arms and pouring words of sympathy and affection into her ears, he quietly took her hand and in a few manly expressions bade her not give way for the sake of the name she bore —but to hope that the day would yet dawn which would give her her husband's love, and then he left her, not daring to trust himself too long alone by the side of the woman he loved, in her trying and heart-rending grief.

That evening, before dinner, the English Secretary with his wife and daughter were introduced in the drawing-room to Armida and an English lady, Mrs. Brow, who had been staying with Elvira for the last year.

This Mrs. Brow was a woman of about fifty, with a thoroughly worldly and graceful manner and a bright searching pair of

eyes. She was always elegantly dressed, and seemed to act as if she were a kind of chaperon for the young and charming hostess. She and Sidney were old friends, and it seemed to please them to meet in Sweden, though nothing much was said about it. Mrs. Brow asked him a great many questions respecting his wanderings, and why he came so far north.

"After I had been six months in Greece and Turkey I thought I would return to England," he answered, "and when there it struck me I had never been to Sweden, so I packed up again and came here to learn to know Lady Casterton's land and countrymen."

"Didn't you see the Marchioness Brissier?" asked Elvira, who was talking to the Englishman on her right hand, but had an ear to all Sidney was saying.

"Yes! oh yes! I saw her! I was at Harton Court a few days ere I left England.

She sent you a greeting, my lady, and awaits you in September."

At that moment Mrs. Brow lifted her eyes from her plate and quietly fixed them on Sidney with astonishment.

## CHAPTER XII.

IT was night. Around the stately château silence and stillness reigned, while within, every one had sought his or her chamber till morning.

In the west wing of the château, in a verandah which looked over the forest, sat Lotta. With her hands clasped in prayer and her eyes raised to heaven, she seemed lost in thought. On her knee lay a Bible from which she had just been reading.

An expression of sadness lay on her face, as if she had a sorrow that the world knew not of.

Deep in the wood a nightingale began trilling its evening song. Soon the song

ceased and silence once more reigned around. Presently Lotta was awakened from her reverie by a voice calling softly from under the trees.

"Lotta!"

She rose half frightened at the unusual disturbance, and going to the edge of the verandah to see from whence the voice came, she saw a man stepping towards her from under the shadow of the firs.

"Look at me," he whispered, hastening forward, "don't raise an alarm! Be quiet. I must speak to you."

She clasped her hands and murmured something between her teeth, for she thought she saw a ghost.

"Don't you know me, Lotta?" continued the man coming still nearer. "Does your memory fail you?"

"The memory of you is burnt into my soul," she muttered in answer. "Why do you come? What do you want? Oh God!

your coming will bring such misery—and I hoped you were dead long ago."

"I am dead to the whole world but you, and one other."

"And you are to *her* too!" cried Lotta. "You *must* be, or I cannot tell you the sorrow you will cause," and she began to cry in her distress.

"Hush, woman! Listen to me. *She* shall never know me. I didn't look you up to disturb her, but to hear from you one or two things Bromér refused to tell me."

"And if I tell you will you go away again, and promise not to return?"

"I will go away, and not return," said the man in a gruff whisper.

"Then come in here to my room, where no one can hear what we say."

He sprang up the verandah steps with a bound, and following her, went into the chamber through the open French window,

shut the door behind him, and drew down the curtain.

The door was hardly closed when a face appeared close to the verandah, belonging to a tall, manly figure; with a light and noiseless tread he walked up the verandah steps and stood against the door, through which Lotta and the man had disappeared.

He remained there long before he could distinguish a word that was said inside. At last the voices grew louder and more distinct:

"And the father, what did he do?"

"All he troubled himself about was to see that the body was buried," answered Lotta, as if it hurt her to speak; "the child's fate would have been the foundling, if Bromér had not taken it. The first year or two I was afraid he would inquire after the child, and I never let her go out. She was brought up as Bromér's daughter, and hasn't the least idea in the world that she

was born in a prison, or what miserable parents she had."

"And he has been tender and kind to her?"

"Tenderer and kinder than her own parents would have been. He worked and strove day and night to amass the riches she now enjoys. When she married, he said to me, 'Now I shall die content. I have given her back the rank and riches taken from her at her birth. I have paid my debt to the father, and by love and care of the child have atoned for the evil of the past.'"

"And you have the paper proving who the child was?" he asked, anxiously.

"Yes! of course I have, and—" the voice sank lower again, till the man at the door could hear nothing; then with a smile of triumph on his face, he turned and went as silently as he came.

The midnight watch had rung clear and

loud when Lotta opened the door on the verandah, and let the man pass out who had been talking with her. She watched him till the deep shadows hid him from her view, then quietly shut to her door and went in.

## CHAPTER XIII.

BEFORE Lotta was dressed the next morning, Elvira entered her room.

"Who was it paid you a visit late last evening?" she asked.

"Me!" stammered Lotta, scarlet in the face; "I had no visit."

"What's the meaning of that falsehood?" said Elvira, "I was coming to see you after all the lights were out, and I just opened the door at the other end of the verandah, when I saw—"

"An old man," interrupted Lotta, with impatience. "What does it matter if you

did? Can't I have a talk with whom I will?—besides, it was an old friend of your father's who came to hear a little about his last illness, and I think," she continued, angrily, "I am capable of judging for myself if it's right or not to admit to my own sitting-room any one I please. I never believed the child I nursed would spy my actions like this; and if I speak truth or not, I must answer for it myself, I—"

"Are you mad, Lotta," exclaimed Elvira, "that you are angry about nothing?"

"Angry? I angry? Heavens! how can I be angry with you? But—"

"You misunderstood me. I have no wish to spy over you, dear Lotta. How can you imagine it? I only came to say good-night."

"Child of my heart! don't speak like that, it makes my heart ache, and—"

"Be quiet, Lotta, and don't cry," said Elvira kindly, as she went near her old

nurse. "When I opened the door to cross the verandah, standing there close to the window, was Carl Brogren. Do you wonder I ask and wish to know why he came to see you so late in the evening?"

"But he wasn't here at all, it was—was—some one else whom you don't know, whose name you have never heard. Oh dear, how wretched I am!"

"Why cry your eyes out over it, Lotta? I don't ask about the stranger; but I am *certain* it was Carl stood there when I opened the door."

"But it couldn't have been. *He* whom I spoke to is the same height; you mistake, my lady. But if it was Carl, then Heaven help us if he heard what I said!" And she put her head on the table and appeared terribly distressed.

"Well, never mind about it," said Elvira as she left the room, after doing all she could to comfort her.

But she thought to herself as she remembered Lotta's strange outburst of anger and scared look,

"There is some secret here; what can it be?"

At breakfast she put aside her curiosity about Lotta to attend to her guests, and did not at first notice how often Mrs. Brow scanned her countenance with a searching and questioning glance.

After the letters and news were discussed, Mrs. Brow said:

"What a very confined view Lotta has from her rooms. I wonder she is not ill, for she rarely leaves them."

"Do you think she looks ill?" asked Elvira in an undertone.

"She is pale to-day, and says she has the headache. I saw her just now."

"But I like her rooms," said Armida; as a peculiar smile flitted round her mouth for a moment. "She has the verandah, and

the forest is so near, and it is so quiet and away from the world there."

Elvira was getting anxious, and as soon as she could, changed the conversation to another subject.

As they were leaving the breakfast table, Sidney said to Elvira:

"I must go to Stockholm this evening, Lady Casterton, and so bid you farewell to-day, but——"

"Can't we persuade you to stay a little longer, Sir Sidney? Are you obliged to leave us so soon?"

"Yes, I must go, I heard you give the order just now for the carriage to drive over to the Count E.'s. Are you going too?"

"No, I am not—why?"

"Will you give me an hour then whilst your friends are gone? I would like one more chat with you alone ere I go?"

"Then come with me to my morning-

room, Sir Sidney. I am really sorry you have determined to leave me to-day."

And she crossed the hall and led the way to her own special sitting-room.

The other guests strolled into the garden, leaving Armida alone with Mrs. Brow. Armida had once or twice tried to get a little information from the elder lady respecting the Casterton family, but the Englishwoman never seemed inclined to talk, and now to all Armida's remarks about Lotta, and the wing she lived in, she barely obtained any response. After a rather long silence, during which Mrs. Brow steadily went on knitting, Armida asked,

"Is Mr. Lembourn an old friend of Lady Casterton's?"

"I believe so," was the short answer.

"Did she know him before she met Lord Casterton?"

"I can't say."

"Does Sir Sidney know her husband?"

"They played together as children."

"Then I suppose he is here with a message from Lord Casterton?"

"May be."

"I am sure of it, for you can't imagine how delighted she was when she received his card. It was only to look in her face to see that he was welcome. Will her husband come, do you think?"

"It is just possible," and Mrs. Brow lifted her eyes from her work and fixed them on her questioner. "And you, Miss Armida, do you know Fröken Martha Stangenskjöld?" she asked in her turn.

"I was in her father's house for several years."

"I mean, you were her friend?"

Armida looked uneasy and very astonished as she answered,

"I firmly believed so myself; but how do you know anything of me or Martha?"

"That's my affair." A contemptuous smile shone from her face as she added, "I will offer you a piece of advice, don't you try to be Lady Casterton's friend."

"Why not? has she such a dislike to me that her friendship is not to be relied on?"

"I am not speaking of her, but of you, Miss Armida. If you imagine *you* have any friendship for her, you deceive yourself."

Mrs. Brow rose slowly from her chair, folded her knitting together, put it in her basket and was leaving the room when Armida exclaimed:

"Stop a moment, don't go yet," and as Mrs. Brow turned round she continued, "What do you mean? Do you intend raising a doubt in Elvira's mind as to my gratitude and affection for her, and so take from me the help she gives me? If you do this, you have some motive for it, your

expression tells me so. I don't know your position here, but I do know that to me Elvira is most kind, and she is all I have to rely on for the future."

"And your hope will not fail you; she is good to friends and foes. I don't want to snatch from you her help. Be comforted, it is not me you have to fear, but—but your own self. I must go now."

The door closed behind her, and as Armida went back to her seat she murmured to herself,

"That woman and I are foes. I felt it the first hour I saw her. She will do me harm, I know, but I will be even with her yet. I wonder why she is here! She is always in her own room, has her own maid, dresses beautifully, and seems more like a relative, only there is evidently no affection between them, they speak so little to each other. But there is something peculiar in Elvira's position I am sure. I must find

it out and make myself so necessary to her that she will not care to be away from me. Who and what is this Sidney Lembourn, I wonder! Some lover, I am sure, or if not then I am at fault for once; he must be, and I'll find out before long all about it some how. There is some secret here depend upon it, and if I find it out it may bring me luck, but I must be more cautious than I was with Martha."

After a moment she rose and stood before the glass and arranged her hair. She was not beautiful in features, but her face was attractive at times, and her hair and teeth were perfect. She had a tall, well-developed figure, and knew the art of arranging her dress with taste and simplicity combined.

"Never would I have believed that Elvira would turn out more beautiful than I," she thought, "and be married before I got a lover even, and to such a man too.

But never mind, it is not all gold that glitters, and if she is more beautiful she is not half as clever. How I hate every one *he* loved. Ah! me, I dare not think of him now. I will go to the library to fetch a book, she and the Englishman are there of course, and if I enter softly I may hear something that may be useful to know."

But she was disappointed, for on opening the door the library was empty.

## CHAPTER XIV

IN the pretty morning-room already described, sat Sidney with his hostess. The windows were open to admit the air, and outside the birds sang, and the sun shone with brightness and gladness.

"Now I have told you," said Elvira in her clear, ringing voice, "the reason why I married Lord Casterton, you will understand why I freed him from living by my side. When I proposed coming to my own country and leaving him free, I hoped he would object, I did indeed. And if he had said one single word of regret, or expressed the slightest wish for me to remain,

I would have stayed thankfully. He saw how crushed and sad I was just then, and that I sorely needed tenderness and affection, but he let me go without a word. You say I was wrong, and that I ought to have sacrificed myself for him. Ah, yes, perhaps you are right, but he didn't care for me, and did not wish me to be near him. I bore his name, but all love he kept from me. Do you think I have any duty to fulfil towards a man who can so treat me? Why didn't he tell me beforehand that he married merely to win back his estates, and that it was impossible to love me? I might then have chosen my fate or been free, but now—now——"

"You hug your grief, and imagine that he only is to blame."

"No, no, I do not. You told me once 'a wife should study her husband's happiness,' and I left him for that reason, he is more happy without me. And the mar-

chioness said to me one day, 'If a woman knows her husband does not love her, she should never weary him with her presence.' And I was so young and I thought it best as I had my own château to come and live here, for as Edwin does not love me it must be wearisome for him to be constantly in my presence."

"But, on the other hand, he would learn to love you," answered Sidney, in a low tone.

"Oh, no; he said to you he should *never* love me. And it would be as useless for me to buoy myself up with the hope that the month spent at Harton Court would make him care for me one iota more, as to expect the night to turn into day, or the birds to sing when they are dead."

"And it was during your last stay together at Harton Court that Edwin, in a letter to me, spoke much of you, and very kindly too."

"Perhaps," she answered, sadly. "But hear how he acted. I lost my father, as you know, and came straight here. In the ten following months I had only two letters from him—one to tell me to do as I liked about my father's will, the other that he would meet me in Copenhagen that we might together journey to Harton Court. When we did meet he greeted me coldly—asked me nothing about myself, or how I bore my father's death, or how I had spent the months since I left England. At Harton Court I only saw him at dinner. He never spoke of himself, and it was his aunt who told me that he had entered your parliament, and won renown by his clever speeches. At the end of the month we left Harton Court, and he took me to London, and presented me to some of his friends. When there I only saw him before strangers. After a few days he brought Mrs. Brow to me, and said before

her, 'Lady Casterton, you are too young to be alone in the world—this lady will stay by you always.' I bowed my head, but I felt it bitterly."

"But he was right there. You *are* young, and very beautiful, and need, perhaps, some one older by your side, not to guard you from yourself, dear Lady Casterton, but from the world's censure," he answered, as he looked at her with pity and sympathy shining in his eyes.

"Well, I accepted her companionship, and with her I went to Italy for the winter, and she came here, as you see. Some time ago I had a letter from the marchioness, in which she says he also was abroad, and constantly with a Swedish family with a very beautiful daughter, and she seemed to fancy——"

"Do you know the name of the family?" asked Sidney, interrupting her.

"Yes."

"Well, then—do you—does it distress you that he is interested in her, and shows his open admiration? You know you are to blame. Casterton would not, could not care for another woman if he had his wife by his side," said Sir Sidney, half afraid he might offend by his plain speaking.

"You mistake," she answered, with the tears in her eyes. "He doesn't love me—why—there is no reason—that—he should not love another——"

"Then you do him an injustice," he answered, warmly. "If you had not let your wounded pride lead you, but had followed the dictates of your heart, and remained by him, he would have done everything in his power to make your life happy. Allow he was cold, and did not love you, if you had stayed with him and tried to make his home pleasant, he would have been obliged to care for you. Why—why—do you make me say these hard things to you?"

he went on, after a moment's pause. "Don't you know that *your* happiness is dearer to me than aught else on earth? And yet," he added, as the colour fled from his cheek, and he started up and paced the room with quick nervous steps, "and yet the honour and happiness of my earliest friend is sacred to me. You will see Casterton, my lady, in the autumn at Harton Court. Go home with him, try and put aside your pride, show him the soft womanly side of your nature, be tender——"

"I cannot—I can't," interrupted Elvira, impatiently; "that I should be tender and loving to a man who——"

"Will seek it elsewhere then," in his turn interrupted Sidney. "*Do,* I entreat you, for your own sake, for your future welfare, put your pride under lock and key, and try and win him to love you. I know you will succeed, for who could

resist you? Try, only try; you will reap the benefit of it in time."

She was silent. His disapprobation of her conduct wounded her, and his entreaties pained her. She went to the window and stood there, but said nothing. He followed her, and said gently: "Have my words been too plain? have I pained you? I spoke the truth, and God knows I suffer more than you do. He *is* your husband; no one else *dare* love you; and it is your *best* friend who speaks to you—one who has your good at heart——"

"His, not mine," she answered bitterly. "Your friendship for him makes you partial, and hard to me. Oh! Sir Sidney, I thought *you* cared for me, but now I see you do not. No one cares for me—all condemn me." And she leant against the window and wept.

Sidney seized her hand as he cried out in the agony she caused him—

"Elvira! how can you say that?"

She looked up, but in a moment her eyes drooped again, and the colour in her cheek deepened.

He let go her hand, and, recovering quickly from his forgetfulness of the moment, said, as his voice still trembled with restrained feeling—

"The injustice of your words I see you acknowledge, so I need not comment on them. You will promise me to remember what I say? and let me go, with the hope that you will follow my kindly-meant advice?"

"I promise," she answered, as her voice was half drowned in her tears.

"Thank you," and he kissed her hand. "Now, farewell; in an hour I start," and he turned to the door to go. But a tall figure stood in his way.

"Casterton!" exclaimed Sidney.

Elvira turned round hastily, as she

"But for her sake I would not have ventured here," said Edwin coldly. "I wouldn't have disturbed your quiet with my presence, but my lady aunt took it into her head to come, and wished for my company. I could not but follow her to—*my wife.*"

Without a word in answer, she took his arm, and, followed by Sidney, went into the drawing-room. But her heart ached at his bitter words.

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